Critical Incident Response Plan

A sample step by step plan for the first hours, days, and weeks after a serious incident connected to your academy: an arrest or criminal charge involving an owner, coach, staff member, volunteer, or member; a report or disclosure of abuse or misconduct; or a serious injury, threat, or emergency. Its purpose is to protect students first: keep everyone safe, get concerns to the right authorities, support the people affected, and keep an accurate record of what happened and what was done. It shows the order of steps and points you to the other Academy Safe sample documents you will need along the way.

Important notice: This is a free sample safety document. It is a starting point, not a finished policy, and it is not a legal document or legal advice. Laws differ by location. Have a qualified attorney review and adapt it for your academy before use. Academy Safe is not responsible for errors or missing information in this document, or for how it is used. In an emergency, call 911.

Read this first. Call your attorney before you act. Academy Safe is a nonprofit Martial Arts Safety Registry. We are not a law firm, an incident response or crisis management company, a law enforcement agency, a child protective services agency, or an investigator. We do not represent your academy, and using this sample does not create an attorney, consulting, or advisory relationship with Academy Safe.
This plan describes general practices many organizations follow. Your facts, your insurance policy, and the laws where you operate will be different. Before you send any message, make any statement, take any employment or membership action, or share any records, speak with your own attorney. If you do not have one, ask your business insurance agent or your state or provincial bar association for a referral. Your attorney's advice controls over anything in this sample.
If a child or anyone else is in immediate danger, call 911 first.

Academy name: _____

Academy address: _____

Effective date: _____

Last reviewed: _____

Fill This In Before You Need It

Complete this page now and keep a printed copy with the owners and the front desk. In a crisis, nobody should be searching for phone numbers.

Who	Name and contact
Your attorney	
Your business insurance agent and policy number	
Local police (non emergency line)	
State or provincial child protective services reporting line	
Designated spokesperson (one person)	
Backup spokesperson	
Person who manages keys, alarm codes, and accounts	
Person who manages camera footage	
Local children's advocacy center or counseling referral	

When to Use This Plan

- An owner, coach, staff member, volunteer, or member is arrested, charged, or convicted of a crime, whether or not it happened at the academy.
- A student, parent, or anyone else reports abuse, misconduct, or a safety concern involving a student or a minor.
- Law enforcement contacts the academy about anyone connected to it.
- A serious injury, medical emergency, threat, or violent event happens at the academy or at an academy event.

Not every section applies to every incident. For an injury or medical emergency, start with the Injury and Medical Emergency Response Procedure and use this plan for communication, records, and follow up. For a disclosure or allegation of abuse, follow the Abuse or Misconduct Allegation Response Procedure first: keep the child safe, listen, do not investigate, and report.

Students Come First

Every step in this plan exists to protect students and to make sure concerns reach the people whose job it is to investigate them. Documenting the incident accurately helps investigators, protects the students involved, and shows exactly what was done and when. Nothing in this plan should be used to discourage anyone from reporting, to influence what a student or family says, or to shield anyone from accountability. If following any step would put a student at risk, put the student first and call law enforcement or child protective services.

Three Rules for Everything That Follows

1. **Stick to confirmed facts.** Say only what is true and confirmed. Use words like "arrested," "charged," or "reported," never "guilty." Do not guess, add detail, or repeat rumors.
2. **Use public and official information only.** Rely on public records, such as an arrest report, booking record, or court docket, and on what investigators tell you through official channels.
3. **Do not repeat information shared informally.** If a friend, member, or acquaintance who works in law enforcement or the courts tells you something unofficially, do not repeat it. It can harm the investigation, affect the people who were harmed, and put that person in a difficult position.

Write down what you know and what you do not know, in one place, and keep it current. Every message you send later should match it.

Known (confirmed)	Not known yet

Step 1: Right Now (First 2 to 4 Hours)

1. **Make sure everyone is safe.** Call 911 if anyone is in danger. If a child discloses abuse, keep the child with a trusted, screened adult.

2. **Call your attorney.** Ask them to review every step and every message in this plan before it goes out.
3. **Name one spokesperson.** One person handles every question from parents, students, media, and law enforcement. Everyone else says: "The safety of our students is our top priority, and we are cooperating fully with law enforcement. Please speak with [Spokesperson]. We are not commenting further."
4. **Remove the person involved from all contact with students, pending more information.** This is a safety step, not a finding of guilt. Your attorney can put it in writing: no entry to the premises, classes, or open mats, and no contact with students through academy channels. If the person comes to the academy, call the police; do not confront them.
5. **Secure the building.** Recover any keys without meeting the person alone or discussing the case. Your attorney can request return of property in writing. Re-key or change locks if keys cannot be recovered right away. Change alarm codes, door codes, Wi-Fi passwords, and any shared passwords.
6. **Remove system access.** Remove the person from your membership software, scheduling or booking system, email, website, social media accounts, and group chat admin roles.
7. **Stop all deleting.** Tell staff not to delete any messages, photos, videos, files, or records. See Step 2.
8. **Pause scheduled marketing.** Pause scheduled social posts, promotions, and ads, especially youth program ads, for at least 7 days out of respect for the students and families affected.

Do not: contact the person about the case, question students, run your own investigation, post anything online, comment in group chats, or delete the person's photos or posts yet.

Step 2: Preserve Records (Same Day)

Many security camera systems overwrite footage within days. This step cannot wait.

1. Export and save security camera footage for as far back as your system holds it. Store a copy on a separate drive.
2. Pull and save: class schedules and attendance for any classes the person led or assisted; private lessons and who attended; key, door access, and alarm logs; the person's membership file, waivers, and staff or volunteer paperwork; messages between the person and students or parents in academy channels; and photos or videos of the person on your website, business listings, and social media (download or screenshot before anything is taken down).
3. Keep these records private. Share them only with your attorney, your insurer, and law enforcement if they request them. When possible, give records to law enforcement through your attorney.

Use: Records Confidentiality and Retention Policy, to decide where records are stored and who can access them.

Step 3: Document Everything (Start Today, Keep Going)

Keep one Incident Log, such as a notebook or a secure shared document. Each entry needs the date, time, who was involved, what happened or was decided, and who made the decision. Log:

- How and when you learned of the incident, and from whom
- Every call with your attorney, insurer, law enforcement, child protective services, and Academy Safe
- Key recovery, lock and code changes, and account removals, with the date and who did it
- Every message sent, with a copy of the exact wording, the date, and the recipient list
- Every question or concern from a parent, student, or staff member, and how it was handled

Date	Time	Who	What happened or was decided	Decided by

Step 4: Notify the Right People (First 24 Hours)

1. **Your insurance carrier.** Many policies require prompt notice of any situation that could lead to a claim, and some abuse and molestation coverage has strict notice rules. Log the date, time, and any claim or reference number.
2. **Law enforcement, through official channels.** Directly or through your attorney, ask for the lead investigator's name, agency, and case number. Ask: Is there anything you want us to do, or not do? Is it okay to notify our families now, and is there wording to avoid? Do you want our records or camera footage? If a family has a concern, who should they call? Log the answers.
3. **Child protective services, when required.** If anyone knows or suspects that a child has been abused, report it right away to child protective services or law enforcement. In many places every adult has a legal duty to report, and telling the academy owner does not replace that duty. Reasonable suspicion is enough; you do not need proof. Find your state or provincial reporting line on the Academy Safe Safety Hotlines and Registries page.
4. **The U.S. Center for SafeSport, where applicable.** If your academy, staff, or athletes fall under the Center's jurisdiction, report to the Center as its rules require.
5. **Academy Safe, if your academy is registered with us.** Send a short, factual written notice to support@academysafe.org. Academy Safe's Terms and Conditions require registered academies to report an arrest, charge, or conviction of an owner, coach, or staff member, and any reported incident, allegation, or concern involving a student or minor, immediately and no later than 24 hours after becoming aware, and to report staff changes within 7 days. Academy Safe will update your registry listing as needed. Academy Safe does not investigate incidents or advise on your case.

Step 5: Brief Your Coaches and Staff (Before Families Hear Anything)

Hold a short meeting or call with every coach, assistant, and front desk staff member. Have each person sign the Staff Training Acknowledgment Form to record that they attended. Example briefing, to adapt with your attorney:

"We learned that [name or role] was [arrested / charged / the subject of a report] on [date]. [Only if confirmed: This did not happen at the academy, and it does not relate to anything that happened here. At this time, there is no indication that any of our students are involved.] [Name or role] has been removed from all contact with students and is not allowed on the premises while this is pending. We are working with our attorney and cooperating with law enforcement.

Here is what we need from you. Stick to these facts and to public information only. Do not repeat rumors or anything you heard informally. Do not discuss this with students, parents, or online. Do not post or comment anywhere. Send every question to [Spokesperson]. Do not delete any messages or photos. If any child or parent tells you anything concerning, follow the Mandatory Reporting Guide: report it to child protective services or law enforcement right away, then tell [Spokesperson]. Do not question the child."

Step 6: Tell Families and Students (Within 24 to 48 Hours, After Attorney Review)

Families should hear this from you, calmly and quickly, before they hear rumors. Follow any instructions from investigators about timing and wording. If the concern involves a parent or someone in a child's home, do not notify that family; follow the instructions of child protective services.

6A. Phone calls first, to families most directly affected

Call the parents of children who attended classes or private lessons with the person involved, or who were otherwise directly affected. A personal call shows care and lets parents ask questions. Log each call. Example of what to share:

> "Hi [Parent], this is [Spokesperson] from [Academy]. I am calling families personally because we have difficult news, and I wanted you to hear it from us first. [Name or role], who [describe role, such as helped with classes], was [arrested / charged / the subject of a report] on [date]. [Only if confirmed: It did not happen at the academy, and at this time there is no indication that any of our students are involved.] [Name or role] has been removed from the academy and is not allowed on our premises. We are cooperating fully with law enforcement.
>
> We are asking families to have a calm conversation with their child and to check whether this person ever contacted your child outside of class, such as by text, social media, or gaming apps. If you learn anything concerning, please report it directly to law enforcement or child protective services, and let us know if you are comfortable. We will send a written message shortly with resources. What questions can I answer?"

6B. Written message to all youth families (email, then text)

Subject: An important message from [Academy]

> Dear [Academy] families,
>
> We are writing to share difficult news directly with you. On [date], [name, or "an adult who [role]"; your attorney will advise whether to use a name] was [arrested / charged / the subject of a report] [on charges related to: describe only as stated in public records].
>
> [Only if confirmed: This did not happen at the academy, and it does not relate to anything that happened at the academy. At this time, there is no indication that any of our students are involved.]
>
> [Name or role] has been removed from the academy, their access to our facility has been removed, and they are not permitted on our premises. We are cooperating fully with law enforcement.
>
> [Optional, with attorney approval: This person completed our screening process, including a background check. A background check shows past records; it cannot predict future behavior. We are reviewing our safety practices.]
>
> Your children's safety is our first priority. We are asking every family to: have a calm, open conversation with your child about safe and unsafe adult behavior; check whether this person ever contacted your child outside of class, including texts, social media, or gaming apps; and if you learn anything concerning, report it directly to law enforcement or child protective services. If a child is in danger, call 911.
>
> Helpful resources: [local children's advocacy center]; the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-422-4453 (call or text, U.S.); the NCMEC CyberTipline, 1-800-843-5678 or report.cybertip.org (U.S.); Cybertip.ca, 1-866-658-9022 (Canada); and Academy Safe's Parent Guide: Warning Signs of Grooming.
>
> Because this is an active legal matter, we cannot share further details, and we ask that you not speculate in group chats or on social media. Please direct questions to [Spokesperson] at [phone or email].
>
> Respectfully,
> [Names], [Academy]

6C. Message to adult members

Send the same message adjusted for adults: keep the facts, the removal, the cooperation with law enforcement, the reporting resources, and the request not to speculate. Remove the parenting instructions.

6D. Group chats and text groups

1. Set every academy group to "admins only" messaging for a few days, so rumors and children's names do not appear in the chat.
2. Take a screenshot of the member list for your records, then remove the person from every academy group.
3. Post a short notice that points to the full message. Do not post details in the chat. Example notice: "[Academy] families and members: we have sent an important message by email about a member of our community. Please read it carefully. If you did not receive it or have questions, contact [Spokesperson] at [phone]. We have temporarily limited messaging in this group. Thank you for respecting everyone's privacy."

6E. Optional parent meeting (days 3 to 7)

With your attorney's approval, consider an in person or video meeting. Invite a local children's advocacy center or a licensed child counselor to speak about talking with children. Keep the academy's part to the facts, the steps you took, and the safety changes you are making.

Step 7: Public Statement and Social Media (After Families Are Notified)

Order matters: staff first, then families, then the public. Families should never learn this from a social media post.

- **Decide with your attorney** whether to post a statement or keep one ready. If the matter is in the news, in local community groups, or parents are posting about it, a short, factual statement helps families get accurate information and know where to report concerns.
- **Before you post,** archive the person's photos and videos (Step 2), then remove the person from coach bios, your website, business listing photos, and pinned posts. Do not mass delete older posts that show other students.

Example public statement (do not name the person unless your attorney advises it):

> A message from [Academy]
>
> We recently learned that [an adult connected to our academy, described by role] was [arrested / charged / the subject of a report]. [Only if confirmed: This did not happen at the academy, and at this time there is no indication that any of our students are involved.] The individual was immediately removed and is no longer permitted on our premises. We have notified our families directly, and we are cooperating fully with law enforcement.
>
> The safety of our students is our highest priority. If you have information that may help, please contact [agency] or your local child protective services agency. If a child is in danger, call 911. Because this is an active legal matter, we will not be commenting further.

Comments, reviews, and media

- Limit or filter comments on the post if the platform allows. Hide, do not delete, comments that name children, spread rumors, or attack individuals. Leave honest concern and criticism visible.

- Use one consistent, factual reply for comments and online reviews: "Thank you for your concern. The safety of our students is our top priority. We have notified our families directly and are cooperating with law enforcement. Please contact [Spokesperson] at [phone or email] with questions."
- If media calls, the spokesperson only: "We are aware of the matter. The individual was immediately removed and is not permitted on our premises. We have notified our families and are cooperating fully with law enforcement. Because this is an active legal matter, we have no further comment." Do not go on camera or speculate.

Step 8: Support Your Community (Weeks 1 and 2)

- Be present and available at classes so students and families can ask questions or raise concerns.
- Respect any family's decision to pause or cancel. Respond kindly and without pressure.
- If any child or parent discloses a concern, follow the Abuse or Misconduct Allegation Response Procedure exactly: listen, do not investigate, report, and document the same day.
- Use the Parent Complaint and Concern Procedure for other concerns, and log every one. Follow the Anti-Retaliation Policy so anyone who comes forward is protected.
- Check on your staff and on members who were close to the person involved. This is hard for everyone.

Step 9: Review and Strengthen Your Safety Practices (Within 30 Days)

Use what you learned to make students safer. Then send families a short follow up describing the changes (no new details about the case).

1. Audit your roster. Confirm that everyone who teaches, assists, volunteers, or holds a key is screened and current, and, if you are registered with Academy Safe, disclosed on your listing.
2. Create a key and access policy: a written list of who holds keys and codes, with owner approval for any new key holder.
3. Adopt a two-adult rule for youth classes and private lessons, so no adult is alone with a child.
4. Require visibility and owner approval for private lessons.
5. Route messages with minors through official academy channels with a parent copied, never private direct messages.
6. Complete the 8 Pillars Self-Assessment Checklist and share your updated policies with families.

Academy Safe Sample Documents to Use With This Plan

All are free samples on the Academy Safe Safety Documents page, academysafe.org/resources/safety-documents. Have your attorney review each one before you rely on it.

Document	Use it for
Incident Report Form: Misconduct or Abuse Concern	Formal record of what was reported and how you responded
Incident Report Form: Injury or Medical Event	Record of any injury or medical emergency
Incident Reporting and Parent Notification Procedure	When and how to notify authorities and families
Abuse or Misconduct Allegation Response Procedure	Step by step response to a disclosure or allegation
Injury and Medical Emergency Response Procedure	First response to injuries and medical events
Mandatory Reporting Guide for Staff	Briefing every coach on their duty to report
Staff Discipline and Removal Procedure	Documenting removal of a staff member or volunteer
Staff Training Acknowledgment Form	Recording attendance at the staff briefing
Anti-Retaliation Policy	Protecting anyone who comes forward

Records Confidentiality and Retention Policy	Storing and protecting incident records
Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy	Rules for messaging and posting going forward
Parent Guide: Warning Signs of Grooming	A resource to share with families
Parent Complaint and Concern Procedure	Handling and logging family concerns
Two-Adult Rule and Supervision Ratios; Private Lesson Policy	Supervision changes after the incident
8 Pillars Self-Assessment Checklist	Overall review of your safety practices

Quick Checklist

When	Action	Done
Hours 0 to 4	Everyone safe; 911 called if needed	☐
Hours 0 to 4	Attorney called	☐
Hours 0 to 4	One spokesperson named	☐
Hours 0 to 4	Person removed from contact with students, in writing through attorney	☐
Hours 0 to 4	Keys recovered or locks changed; codes and passwords changed	☐
Hours 0 to 4	System, account, and group chat access removed	☐
Hours 0 to 4	Scheduled marketing and ads paused	☐
Day 1	Camera footage exported and records preserved	☐
Day 1	Incident Log started; incident report form completed	☐
Day 1	Insurance carrier notified	☐
Day 1	Lead investigator name, agency, and case number recorded	☐
Day 1	Child protective services report made, if required	☐
Day 1	Written notice to Academy Safe, if registered	☐
Day 1	All staff briefed; acknowledgments signed	☐
Days 1 to 2	Phone calls to directly affected families	☐
Days 1 to 2	Written message to all families and adult members	☐
Days 1 to 2	Group chats set to admins only; short notice posted	☐
Days 2 to 3	Public statement, if approved; comment plan in place	☐
Days 3 to 7	Optional parent meeting	☐
Day 30	Roster audit, policy updates, and family follow up	☐

Resources

- Emergency: 911
- State or provincial child protective services: find your reporting line on the Academy Safe Safety Hotlines and Registries page, academysafe.org/resources/safety-hotlines-registries
- Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (U.S.): 1-800-422-4453, call or text. Counselors can connect you to your state's reporting system.
- NCMEC CyberTipline (U.S.): 1-800-843-5678 or report.cybertip.org
- Cybertip.ca (Canada): 1-866-658-9022 or cybertip.ca
- Kids Help Phone (Canada): 1-800-668-6868
- U.S. Center for SafeSport: uscenterforsafesport.org
- Academy Safe: support@academysafe.org, 754-233-0082

Owner Review

Reviewed by attorney (name and firm): _____

Date of attorney review: _____

Sample safety template from Academy Safe, academysafe.org. Not legal advice. Have a qualified attorney review before use.

Owner or director name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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