Arizona Boys State After Action Report

Program improvement for routine and incident responses with an Arizona Boys State After Action Report system. This basic project, similar to the rest of the learning format, is an evolving program built with the fact that the staff can materially change year over year based on the volunteers who report for staffing as well as improvements made to perennial activities led by experienced staff.

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When faced with an incident—be it a campus emergency, natural disaster, act of violence, or significant program disruption—we can only act with the resources and plans we have in place. There is rarely time to learn a new technology or prepare a new response strategy in the thick of a crisis.

Prepare as much as possible beforehand to avoid unnecessary challenges.

We want to make sure that key personnel learn from the experience, that our processes encourage information sharing, and that we capture areas of improvement so that our organization is better prepared for the next incident or incident.

An After Action Report will detail the incidents of the incident itself, how our program responded, what went well or poorly, and then lay out an action plan for improving our preparedness and response for next time.

What Is an After Action Report (AAR)?

An After Action Report is a strategic document used by internal stakeholders to summarize observations and key takeaways following any actual incident that impacts the program. It lays out vital details such as how the exercise went, what went well, areas for improvement, and suggests a concrete plan for improving the response should another similar incident occur. It will allow our organization to identify gaps in our response plans, learn from mistakes or oversights, and be better prepared before we are in the midst of an actual incident.

The After Action Review process, details an incident and discusses the response. However, where reviews are usually kept to just a meeting—either formal or informal—and discussion, an **After Action Report** entails an actual document put together that breaks down action items and response plans.

FYI: These reports were initially used in the military to analyze incidents and adjust responses after training exercises and battle engagements. The government later adopted these reports as the primary way to deliver feedback, and they've since become a standard review process in the U.S. Army.

Today, After Action Reports are used commonly in many organizations, primarily by safety and program continuity professionals. They are an essential tool used to reflect on preparedness exercises and support incident management by ensuring that the program is ready and has learned from past mistakes before an incident occurs.

After Action Reports Should be Standard Protocol. Nearly every program will experience an incident or unplanned incident at some point that impacts employee safety or the bottom line, which is why incident preparedness and program continuity are foundational components of organizational resilience planning. By planning our response before we need it, we set ourselves up for significantly lowering impact and even some level of incident prevention, depending on the incident. And when we practice and reflect on our actions, we can stop ourselves from making the same mistakes over and over.

In conclusion; It can be easy to write off incidents as accidents or one-offs—something that probably won't affect our program moving forward. But without a concrete incident preparedness and response plan, we will likely be caught off guard and suffer program-altering repercussions from an incident. When we take the time to practice, reflect, and respond ahead of time, we'll develop better strategies and prepare resources for those moments when we need to act fast.

If we see the same problems coming up repeatedly, we know we need to pay special attention to improving that aspect of our response plan.

Writing the After Action Report

While developing the report, remember to;

- Follow preparation steps before meeting as stakeholders.
- Obtain the Initial Incident Report.
- Prepare an After Action Report Form for written documentation.

1. Establish the intent of the report

Before answering questions, we need to know what we want the end goal to be. Are we able to mitigating this type of incident from happening again? Are we trying to understand the cause of a misstep or breakdown in supervision? Are we trying to quantify how much time was required so we can accelerate response times in the future? Knowing what we hope to accomplish will help us give a more impactful answers in our report.

2. Identify stakeholders

Collector of data or evidence for (location, scale, and impact)
Counselor of City affected.
Supervisor who activated the response.
Medical
Decision maker
Decision Ratifying Official
Moderator
A Moderator should be identified to represent/communicate on behalf of the **Initial Incident Report (Appendix B)** and initial satisfactory detail for each item to post to the After Action Report. (make notation of initials on right margin of the original report.

3. Meeting logistics (Time/Place)

Establish a list of the stakeholders relevant to this document. Once the list is generated each participant shall be contacted to establish a time and place to meet in-person or virtually.

4. Set Ground Rules

When discussing critical incidents—particularly incidents that impacted personal safety or caused prolonged disruptions—it's vital to have ground rules in place that facilitate an open and honest discussion. A few examples might include setting the expectation that:

- All answers will be taken seriously
- Participants should be honest and respectful
- All concerns will be kept anonymous
- No ideas should be discounted or shut down without posing alternative solutions.

Document and distribute these rules to all participants involved in the discussion, and go through them before starting the meeting.

After Action Report Meeting

1. Post-Incident Recap - In this scenario, what was expected?

The first thing we should go through is the post-incident recap to discuss what was expected from our team leader and project team and the exercise (or if we are analyzing an incident itself, what we expected to happen in this kind of scenario). Ask questions like what resources we had available, whether we could predict this incident beforehand, and anything else we need to measure.

2. Incident Review - What actually occurred?

What happened. Using the 5 "W's" principle, Who did What, When, Where, and if possible Why; everyone in the meeting should share their experience. All individuals involved in the incident shall remain nameless for this record.

3. Incident Analysis - What went well, and why?

Was there one staffer who went above and beyond? Was there one particularly helpful piece of technology? Find the things that went well so that we can replicate or expand that response for the future.

An Action item should highlight each item/outcome.

4. Improvement Areas - What can be improved, and how?

What did not meet expectations or standards for success? Breakdowns in communication or even problems in the response strategy itself. Be sure to discuss without assigning blame or attacking any of the stakeholders or staffers.

Ask probing questions to identify the root cause of issues, and document lessons learned before adjourning.

Once all of our observations and conclusions compile a list of action items and assign each one to a responsible party. These items can be as simple as updating documents or as vital as setting up an incident communication system.

A corrective Action item should come of each item.

Following up on the report

Establish who will be responsible for following up on Action from the AAR. Even after putting in all the work to create the report, we can't assume everything will be done according to plan. Be sure to track progress on the changes and check in frequently with the responsible parties.

Additionally, we should continue to run regular exercises and iterate on our After Action Reports over many trial runs to make sure that our plans are up to snuff. Keeping on top of our report's follow-up means we'll be more prepared if an incident does occur or occurs again.