**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA/ALA Code of Conduct and Crisis Communications

**DATE:** March 6, 2019

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**

Information

**DRAFTS OF MOTIONS:**

**BACKGROUND**

ALA/PLA ask conference registrants to agree to abide by a code of conduct as part of our conference registration process (see attachment). ALA, in consultation with legal, has developed a process staff are to use in the event of on-site issues including code of conduct violations, medical and other emergencies.

Additionally, the ALA Communication and Marketing Office is developing an association-wide crisis communication plan. The lack of a crisis communication plan negatively impacted ALA’s response to the Midwinter-Council situation and the new plan is much needed. The plan will clearly delineate process and should provide confidence that ALA will respond in a timely and appropriate way. PLA and other staff are being given the opportunity to weigh in on the crisis communication plan. In its draft form, the document discourages one-off or unit/office/division-specific responses; ALA’s response speaks for all. Traditionally, PLA has tried to adhere to this guidance. Here are a couple examples of how PLA has expressed support of ALA positions in the recent past:

<http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2017/08/pla-echoes-ala-statement-condemning-racism-and-violence-charlottesville>

<http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2015/12/ala-pla-applaud-kentucky-supreme-court-decision-libraries-tax-rates>

We also post our support of ALA’s stances on social media, our e-news, and on other communication channels

Potential crises can include anything from medical emergencies to harassment to natural disasters and acts of terrorism and these will be covered in the new crisis communications plan. Other things for the board to be aware of:

* For PLA, the volume of formal complaints of inappropriate conduct at events has been small. That does not mean problems do not exist; rather, formal complaints have not been made to staff. Medical emergencies also have been few and have been handled expeditiously and without major incident.
* For medical emergencies, the process is generally clear. For everyone’s safety, it is the correct call to bring in trained medical personnel. Hotels and convention centers have systems in place to address medical issues and communicate building processes to staff in advance of the meetings, which staff share internally and with members on-site.
* For code of conduct complaints, there is an ALA process though it is less concrete and requires a higher level of staff and member judgment. The existing protocol puts the responsibility on the division executive director to implement the outlined process.
* Both members and staff need training related to code of conduct violations. For instance, bystander training is needed, and PLA staff are working with other ALA units to identify and assess bystander training, which may then be offered to staff as well as to speakers and moderators for its conference.
* ALA has resources for addressing issues *in libraries*. These might be repurposed for members and staff at conferences? See OIF-ODLOS resource [here](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/hatefulconduct).

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTION**

This is a status report for the Board’s information. The Board should be aware of the issues and that a crisis communication plan is under development. PLA leadership may be asked to engage at varying levels, depending upon the nature of the crisis. When the crisis communication plan is more fully developed, we will solicit your advice. Suggestions related to the plan and processes are welcome.