

Communication During a Crisis

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What is Crisis Communication?

- Providing information about an event that occurs unexpectedly
- Efforts by organization leaders to inform staff about a crisis and steps to take
- Organization is experiencing the crisis and must respond

Examples

Virginia Tech
September 11th
Tornados
Hurricanes
H1N1
Oil Spill



Start Planning Now

- 95% of concerns and questions for any crisis can be predicted in advance
- 95% of all crisis messaging should be done prior to a crisis
- 95% of all those who would serve as a spokesperson can be trained prior to an event
- Example: TB Outbreak

How to Anticipate?

- Develop scenarios
- Identify your stakeholders and partners
- Address questions and concerns

Crisis Communications



Avoid the NEGATIVES!!!

- Attitude/non-verbal messages
- Remain calm, attentive and polite
 - Don't let your feelings interfere with your ability to communicate in a positive manner
 - Don't convey disgust, frustration, indifference or fear
 - Avoid losing your temper
 - Watch your body language

Crisis Communication

Avoid the Pitfalls

Blame

- Accept your share of the responsibility for problem
- Don't try to shift blame or responsibility to others in order to deflect criticism or minimize your culpability
- Don't magnify the fault to be found in others in order to deflect criticism or minimize your culpability

Crisis Communication

Managing Hostile Situations

- Listen. Recognize people's frustrations and communicate empathy and caring
- Assume a "listening" posture
- Use eye contact
- Answer questions thoughtfully
- Turn negatives into positives

Crisis Communications

Correcting Errors/Rumor Control

- Move quickly to correct errors.
- Keep your level of response appropriate to the level of the problem. Don't overreact.
- If a damaging rumor is confined to a small group, correct it within that group.
- When squelching a rumor, try to anticipate how the rumor might evolve in response to your efforts.
- Don't repeat the rumor or incorrect information.

Crisis Communication

- Contact your Communications Office!
- Be prepared to be accessible and communicate with speed.
- Identify your spokespersons.
- Keep your messages consistent.

You don't want to be in this position by yourself!



Communications Strategies

- Focus less on “we need your commitment” and more on “you can do it and here’s how”
- Remind people they do make a difference
- Give them things to do in steps to master the skills



Other Strategies

- Overcome dread and uncertainty by sharing honest information early
- Overcome helplessness and fear by promoting protective actions
- Overcome despair by engaging people in the response

Leadership Role

- Becomes a symbol of order among chaos
- Authoritative/charismatic leader style in crisis
- Help people reduce fear, anxiety, despondency



Messaging

- Your community will judge your message by its content, messenger, and method of delivery.



Developing a message

- What do you want the public to know?
- Develop your three key message points
- Accurate information is vital

How to Develop Key Messages

Brainstorm

- Think freely and document your information

Select Key Messages

- Identify the most important ideas until you have narrowed your list to three key points

Identify Supporting Data

- Review your ideas and find information that supports your key messages.

Message Maps

It's as simple as 1, 2, 3

One question = 3 answers

Message Mapping

- 27 words
 - total of 27 words for all 3 key messages with each key message averaging 9 words in length)
- 9 seconds
- 3 messages

Message Map

Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
Support 1.1	Support 2.1	Support 3.1
Support 1.2	Support 2.2	Support 3.2
Support 1.3	Support 2.3	Support 3.3

Message Map

Question: How can I protect myself and my family from West Nile virus?

Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
Remove standing water	Wear protective clothing	Use insect repellent
Support 1.1 Unused swimming/wading pools	Support 2.1 Long sleeves	Support 3.1 Containing DEET®
Support 1.2 Flower pots and bird baths	Support 2.2 Long pants	Support 3.2 At least 23 %
Support 1.3 Buckets, pans, cups	Support 2.3 Especially at dusk and dawn	Support 3.3 Medically proven to be effective

Message Map (School District)

Question: Are you ready? How will you handle an H1N1 outbreak?

Key Message 1 We have a plan	Key Message 2 We will provide for every child's health and safety	Key Message 3 Here's what you can do to help
Support 1.1 Maintain health of students, staff and visitors	Support 2.1 We have trained health professionals on staff	Support 3.1 Keep self/child home if ill. Don't return until fever-free for 24 hours without using Tylenol/fever-reducers
Support 1.2 Maintain continuity of operations and learning	Support 2.2 All staff briefed on symptoms, signs and prevention measures	Support 3.2 Practice good hygiene and cough etiquette at home
Support 1.3 Work with local health dept. to track/monitor illness & absenteeism	Support 2.3 All staff teaching/ practicing good hygiene and proper cough etiquette	Support 3.3 Get Vaccinated

Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader?

- When it comes to Crisis Communication & Message Maps, keeping it simple isn't enough
- You need to try and write your messages at the 5th & 6th grade reading level
- When communicating in a "true emergency," experts suggest writing at the 4th grade reading level

Putting Your Messages to the Test

- Help is just a click away
- www.interventioncentral.org
- Click on OKAPI Probe Generator
- Type in your message
- Select Dale-Chall (Grades 4 and up)
- Hit the bar marked "Run Readability Analysis"

Always Remember To ...

- Make eye contact
- Engage in active listening
- Answer questions thoughtfully
- Recognize people's frustrations and communicate with empathy and compassion

Don't Forget

- Always develop 3 Key Messages
- Here's why.....
27 words, 9 seconds, 3 messages

Western Tidewater HD Lakeland High School TB Investigation



Epi Assistance at Lakeland High School



Chesapeake HD TB Investigation of Nurse at Chesapeake General Hospital



Chesapeake HD TB Clinic at Oscar Smith High School



Questions

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