

The Building Blocks of Crisis Communication Planning



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Crisis communication planning.
Why do we do it? Isn't that like asking for trouble?

Introduction

Being prepared to handle a crisis must include a plan to communicate effectively with all those affected. Without it, an organization and the people it serves can suffer even greater consequences. A consistent and coordinated approach to crisis communication strategies is critical for the Department of Early Learning in supporting families and children to prepare for success in school and life. Just as families come in different shapes and sizes, so do communities. Across Washington State, both common and local concerns, clients, stakeholders, resources and liabilities should be considered and planned for in the development of a crisis communication approach. This user-friendly tool will help licensors, contract managers, supervisors, and agency leadership identify potential risks and develop flexible crisis communication protocols that meet statewide needs as well as specific local and regional needs.

Purpose

When a crisis situation develops, time is of the essence. Crisis communication plans need to be in place BEFORE a potentially hazardous situation arises. The crisis communication plan is a basic tool that provides rapid guidance in addressing emergency response situations. While there's no such thing as a "cookie cutter" crisis plan, from a practical application standpoint, an effective crisis communications plan does the following:

- Generates partnership coordination agreements.
- Defines and assigns the crisis communications team.
- Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the crisis communications team.
- Indicates who to contact, the resources that are available and the procedures to follow.
- Details the steps to take in a crisis communications event.
- Provides sample messages across multiple communication platforms that are easily tailored.
- Provides senior leadership endorsement.

Basic Steps in Crisis Communication Planning

Creating the Team. *Who needs to be at the planning table? Who will make decisions and spearhead communications?*

Looking Ahead. *Identify potential crisis situations, response partners, assets, liabilities, roles and responsibilities.*

Process and Protocols. *Develop a clear roadmap to follow during uncertain events when stress is high.*

Key Messages and Platforms. *Create sample messages, templates, and how and when they will be released.*

Prepare and Practice. *Communicating during a crisis takes specific skills which improve with pre-crisis practice.*

Lessons Learned. *The crisis was weathered, things are returning to normal, what was learned?*



Setting the stage.
It may seem like overkill, but in a state agency, a plan for the plan is needed.

Engaging leadership during each step of the planning process is crucial to smoothly implementing a crisis communication plan when needed. A common understanding of the planning process, endorsed and supported by leadership, more effectively involves stakeholders and partners in strategizing for potential events and needs. This involvement matters to the agency image and reputation. Formal agreements, approved agency policies and procedures, and authorized expenditures all require leadership review and approval at various stages of the planning process.

Leadership endorsement:

- Institutionalizes crisis management and response activities
- Clarifies goals and purpose, based on organizational philosophy and values
- Identifies core crisis communication planning team members
- Empowers crisis communication planning team activities
- Establishes formal partnerships with external agencies
- Ensures training and practice in agency response to crisis events



Do your homework.
Plan for both the expected and the unexpected. There’s a reason NASA and the Department of Defense have planning meetings that include speculative fiction writers and cutting edge theoretical scientists. They are planning ahead for likely and unlikely events. Pre-crisis partnership panning meetings provide opportunities to consider all possibilities, scenarios, needs, responsibilities, stakeholders, and to draft flexible messaging strategies.

The heart of the matter.
All the best-intentioned and well-written communications fall flat unless they resonate with the target audience. In DEL, the key message is that **the health and safety of children comes first**. What changes is how the message is framed, based on audience need, purpose, and delivery method. Keep messages simple and to the point. People are 80% feeling and 20% thinking creatures. In times of crisis, thinking can diminish further and feelings can escalate.



***A little stroll down memory lane.
This is who we are, and this is what we do.***

Vision: The Department of Early Learning offers world-class, developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning opportunities for Washington's youngest learners, so each child enters kindergarten with a solid foundation for success in school and life.

Mission: DEL develops, implements and coordinates system oversight of early learning policy and programs that create safe, healthy, nurturing learning experiences for all Washington children. DEL's four strategic goals are to:

1. Provide high-quality, safe, and healthy early care and education opportunities for all children.
2. Partner with and inform parents, families and communities about early learning.
3. Support early learning professionals with professional development and technical assistance.
4. Promote excellence and hold the system accountable for results.



What DEL does: It requires thoughtful partnerships with parents and caregivers, and private and public entities to create the lasting, comprehensive and interconnected early learning system envisioned by the Washington state legislature, advocates and businesses to ensure each child in Washington state enters kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. Some of DEL's main focus areas include:

- Licensing, monitoring, and supporting 7,400-plus licensed child care settings in offering safe, healthy child care.
- Overseeing and supporting the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program in preparing children for success in school and life.
- Setting policy for child care subsidy programs that help low income parents pay for child care while they work, look for work, or attend school; and overseeing eligibility determination and provider payment services through Department of Social and Health Services.
- Coordinating early intervention services for children birth to age 3 with disabilities and/or developmental delays through the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers program.
- Partnering with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to oversee smooth transitions into kindergarten between parents, early learning providers and school teachers.
- Leading the statewide effort to deliver strengths-based home visiting and parent education and support services to children and families.
- Supporting the professional and educational development opportunities for those who care for and teach young children.
- Boosting early learning program quality around the state, and sharing information with families about quality early learning and care in Washington State.

Kids' potential, Our purpose



Imagining what could be.

It's not just how you see it, or how she sees it, or how he sees it. It's how WE see it.

Spending time jointly defining possible crisis events, and developing responses and messaging for events with potential or actual negative outcomes is important. Crisis situations can negatively impact the agency's ability to fulfill its mission and continue functioning effectively. Situations posing threats to safety, health, or property require an organizational response. For example, while the agency works in close partnership with child care providers, contractors, and the child care union, the rights of those stakeholder groups are NOT considered paramount to a child's right to health and safety. This creates a natural tension in planning crisis communication. The chart below summarizes possible threats by three subject areas, providing some illustrative examples and items to consider in developing a specific plan. This is not an all-inclusive list.

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Natural Hazards	Organizational	Human – Intentional or Accidental
Environmental phenomenon that could occur on a local, regional or statewide level, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volcanic activity • Mudslide/Flooding • Wildfire • Tsunami 	Unplanned or planned events that impact the organization's ability to fulfill its obligations, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological • Policy • Misconduct • Power outage 	Situations resulting in injury or death, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury or death to child in licensed facility • Injury or death to child receiving services through agency contractor • Injury or death to agency staff • Injury or death to contractor staff
Consider in assessing threat level and activation of a crisis communication plan:		
Back-Up Operations: where, who, how Federal and state mandates Partners and stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state and local emergency response partners • licensed child care facilities • contractors • legislative representatives • media outlets 	Employee misconduct Policy shifts and public perception Technological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-agency IT systems • regulatory activities • eligibility systems • provider or contractor payments • research activities • HIPAA protected data 	Preventive and safety mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current laws and rules • current plans and strategies Stakeholder and community reaction to events or situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media involvement • legislative interest • advocate interest • crisis response partners



**Taking care of people and places is hard work.
Put your own oxygen mask on first!**

Crisis information and messages must attend to the feeling, thinking and action needs of both internal and external stakeholders. Whether it is a natural disaster, an organizational crisis, or a human-generated crisis, remember that first and foremost people are **feeling** creatures.

Careful word choice and message presentation make a difference in how stakeholders perceive a crisis and the crisis response. Spend time before the crisis, planning:

- what to say
- who should say it
- how it should be said
- which images to use
- when it should be said



Planning ahead can alleviate some of the effects of stress. A crisis communication team will be in action from the time the crisis breaks through the post-crisis assessment phase. During that time, the team will need to effectively and empathically deal with people who are responding to stress in the moment. This is hard work and can take a toll. The following four key ideas offer a starting point for thinking about team

- PREPARATION:** Meet regularly with key staff to learn about any upcoming issues that may change the communication strategies. A crisis communication plan is not written in stone. Adjust as needed!
- TEAMWORK:** Review team member roles and responsibilities, and how to share on-going duties during a crisis. If extra help will be needed, now is the time to make those arrangements, not during the crisis.
- PERSPECTIVE:** A crisis is emotionally and physically draining. Encourage team members to debrief with each other. Sharing thoughts and feelings with each other can help release tension and gain new insights.
- PRACTICE:** Staying calm during crisis includes practicing self-care. Relax when you get home. The point of a team is to share the work load. When you're not in the office, take care of you!



Many hands make light work.

Take stock of all possible stakeholders and what they bring to the planning table.

DEL works in partnership with multiple public and private entities at local, regional, state and national levels. It is important to take the time to identify the people and organizations, their strengths, capacities, assets and liabilities in different crisis situations.

Common DEL Stakeholders

While stakeholders may vary by region or community, it is wise to consider at least the following groups:

Federal Government

Program funding agencies
Disaster response agencies

State Government

Governor's Office
Other agency partners:
DOH, OSPI, DSHS, AAG

Tribes

Urban Indian Organizations
Tribal Liaisons

Local Government

Local health organizations
County and city councils/leaders
First responders

Families/Parents and Guardians

Preschools

Public
Private

Media representatives

Local outlets
Statewide outlets
National outlets

Agency Staff

Executive Team
Program Staff
Licensors

Unions

Child care providers

Center-based
Family home
Subsidized providers

Private-public partnerships

Community based organizations

Agency Contractors

Private for-profit businesses

Early learning partnerships are important to ensure all children in Washington have what they need to succeed in school and life.

DEL is committed to thoughtful partnerships with parents, private entities, the public sector and others to help set up a lasting, comprehensive and interconnected early learning system.

The process of identifying stakeholders can result in a long list of individuals and groups. After creating a comprehensive list, sort the individual organizations into groups with similar interests, needs and influence. This will help with focusing messages and communication strategies appropriately, ensuring that the highest priority groups receive the bulk of time and attention, while providing sufficient information to less involved or influential groups. Appendix A provides a sample template for the stakeholder identification exercise. (See Appendix B for stakeholder prioritization tool.)



So many communication tools, so little time.
Time is of the essence – which options for which stakeholder group will work best?

COMMUNICATION TOOL	BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS
 <p>Phone Bank: toll-free number people can call with questions or to get information Phone Tree: system for contacting targeted group of people quickly who call other designated people on their list</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows monitoring of questions and concerns. information can be used to develop other communications allows two-way interaction with the community provides a way for the community to have their questions answered quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> resource intensive if many people are needed to handle incoming call volume. time intensive for those making the calls. pre-developed flexible messaging and call protocol training needed for clear understanding of role and constraints.
 <p>Traditional Media: TV, radio, and newspapers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> familiar, trusted, and usually easy to access communication systems and protocols in place can include established relationships with reporters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little to no control over messaging; media outlets may edit messages to fit space or time limitations
 <p>Flyer, FAQs, or One-Page Briefing: brief reports summarizing key points or information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective in briefly summarizing facts and issues provides background information for meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one-way communication tool requires clear and succinct writing
 <p>Public meetings: large meetings open to the public, where experts present information and answer stakeholder questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows the community to express concerns and the agency to present information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can intensify conflicts rather than resolve controversies
 <p>Website: houses information and promotes interaction between people, places, and things supporting organizational goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low cost way to easily distribute messages, provide updated information, post links to resources can allow for two-way interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not yet in use across all stakeholders access for some stakeholders may be a concern
 <p>Social media: online communication tools used by large groups to share information, develop contacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide up-to-the minute information quickly allows monitoring of questions and concerns allows two-way interaction with the audience can target, correct and control messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people must generally register to use time to establish presence prior to crisis not all people comfortable using social media applications



Savvy social media.

Interactive, rapid communication with a clear purpose, audience, and intent happen here.

Social media primer

Social media can effectively provide accurate and timely information in crisis and non-crisis situations. However, social media is not a stand-alone communications strategy. Always plan to use traditional media tools and strategies, too. Social media is rapidly evolving and while there are numerous social media platforms, very few people actually make use of all of them, and they each have different levels of comfort and skill in using the applications. While planning communication strategies, keep in mind **social media can be beneficial to the department by:**

- building stakeholder relationships
- providing immediate needed information in case of emergency situation
- increasing understanding of department programs and policies
- directing stakeholders to more comprehensive and complete information
- providing help in accessing services, supports, and community resources

Planning social media communications– items to consider

Social media is valuable tool in the communications tool box. Keep these ideas in mind when planning best usage and crafting messages for the various platforms:

- ✓ Pre-draft flexible template messages specific to the social media platform (see Appendix D for examples).
- ✓ Identify key information to be shared and the social media platform to use. Do they work well together?
- ✓ Craft clear and easily understood messages. Social media applications are designed for quick bites of information.
- ✓ Verify accuracy of information prior to posting, and be ready to correct misinformation as it pops up.
- ✓ Prioritize message delivery in a way that won't overwhelm the audience and allows for their commentary or feedback.



Social media allows real-time responses, alerts, and breaking news for maximum stakeholder benefit.
Centralized social media monitoring ensures maximum consistency of messages and communication strategies.
Social media platforms and applications can increase the department's mobility and presence.
Simple plans and simple messages allow the flexibility needed to address the unpredictable nature of crisis.



Social media quick tips.
10 easy steps for using social media effectively.

- 1. Listen and Be Present**
Pay attention! Fix links and update information. Show you care.
Use websites and forums to catch early signs of trouble and get ahead of the game!
- 2. Set The Right Expectations**
Don't promise what you can't provide!
- 3. Be Transparent**
If you screw up, say so, and what you'll do to fix it.
- 4. Respond Thoughtfully**
Build trust, show you care, take time and effort with your responses.
- 5. Do Not Lose Your Cool – Ever**
Take the high road, offer the other cheek, or just move on without fanfare.
- 6. Have a Crisis Management Team In Place**
A handy tool for addressing early identified up-and-coming issues.
Get your plan in place and have it ready.
- 7. Manage Access To Your Social Media Accounts Carefully**
Who has access and why? What's your policy? How do you check?
- 8. Post Moderation Guidelines**
Treat your forum like your living room and establish clear rules of behavior.
- 9. Hire Experienced Community Managers**
This is the person who connects you to your customer. Choose carefully!
- 10. And Remember... You Will Never Please Everybody**
It's not possible, so stick to your key message and keep your cool.

**Social media means
shared meaning making!**

**Today's world expects a
more active role in
assessing situations,
sharing information, and
finding solutions.**



Adapted from **10 Tips For Reputation And Crisis Management In The Digital World** by Ekaterina Walter.
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ekaterinawalter/2013/11/12/10-tips-for-reputation-and-crisis-management-in-the-digital-world/>



Dark site discussion.
A potentially useful tool in the pre-planning process.

What is a “dark site” and where is it located?

Pre-development of dark sites can be a useful tool in ensuring consistent key messaging around the department’s mission, functions, and primary purpose, especially for crisis events including:

- natural hazards, such as volcanic activity, tsunamis, floods, wildfires
- organizational crisis, such as a long-term failure of critical administrative systems
- human-related crisis, such as a severe injury, disease outbreak, or fatality.

A dark site is a pre-developed web site or web pages that can be activated in the event of a crisis. Dark sites can be housed on their own URL or temporarily replace the main organizational Web site. Either way, users are redirected to the newly activated site which includes the most relevant information and resources. More specific details and documents can be easily added to the “dark site” as the crisis unfolds. This approach is useful, as it:

- Provides timely and accurate information that stakeholders most care about knowing.
- Preserves a positive and accurate organizational image, especially when crisis hits.

What should a dark site include?

As with any web site, the user should see at a glance brief organizational background or history, services, resources, and partners who will play a specific role in addressing the particular crisis. Contact information should be prominent and direct users to an email or phone number that is routinely responded to. Focus on keeping basic information short and simple. This makes it easier for the user to rapidly find what is most relevant or needed.

Research on hazards and conversations with potential partners can help prepare a dark site and may also being to light overlooked concerns or resources that could be brought to bear in crisis situations. Additionally, prepare templates or placeholders ahead of time in the following specific crisis event areas:

- Background information and frequently asked questions
- Links to other departmental social media resources, UTube, etc
- template news releases and official statements
- graphs, pictures, charts or other relevant data

Dark Site Management

By its nature, crisis is highly fluid with many moving parts. Dark site content must be quickly and easily edited.

Involving multiple staff can complicate dark site publishing and updating. For maximum flexibility and responsiveness, house the content publishing tools with a trained editor assigned to this task.

Appropriate leadership approvals for general site content should be secured during the planning phase, and include clear communication and briefing lines so messages are consistent across the different strategies.

Expect website traffic to increase dramatically as people look for information and resources. Make sure there is sufficient bandwidth to accommodate use without crashing.

Otherwise, people will look elsewhere for the information they want – and may end up with information that is incorrect, unhelpful, or even harmful – to them and to the department.

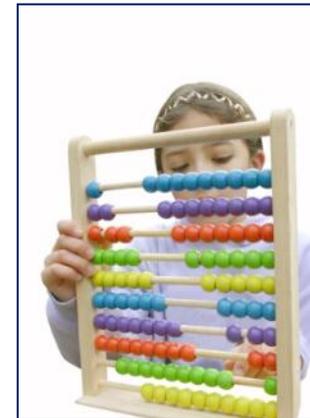


Say what?

One key message for many audiences using many tools.

In a crisis, there are many moving parts, high emotional intensity, and the need for a rapid response. Identify the primary issue and consider the audience, the impact, and level of interest. Will there be stakeholders with the ability to bring resources or a powerful voice to the communication mix?

For DEL, **the key message always centers on the importance of the child’s health and safety**. Details can be filled in as they are verified. Accurate and timely responses establish and maintain credibility with stakeholders, identify DEL as the source for reliable information and help manage the public’s response to the event. (See Appendix C for a sample message map tool to help you in crafting messages.)



Keep in mind the following points while crafting generic, flexible responses.

- Keep information **simple** and **truthful**
- Acknowledge the crisis
- Express **concern** and **compassion** for victims, families and the community
- Recognize peoples’ fears – but don’t linger on them
- Set a time to **update** stakeholders and **follow through**

Write simple and clear key messages. Remember the 5 W’s: who, what, where, when and why. Plan to write multiple messages tailored to different audiences and for different platforms at the same time. The goal is consistency across the different message styles and platforms (see examples Appendix B). Give only **verified** facts. If you don’t know, say so! State the time further details will be released.

Prioritize stakeholder communications.

DEL has a responsibility to all citizens in Washington State, not just those with the most power or influence. In some cases, DEL might be the only advocate or champion for vulnerable citizens. Make sure vulnerable or easily excluded populations are thoughtfully and carefully considered. This includes inviting parent and caregiver representatives to the table for their important and unique insights as to what messaging works best for them in their role as a child’s first and most important teacher.

Communication in today’s world is multi-directional. Planning and strategizing during the calm times allows you to listen deeply to stakeholders and partners. This sets the stage for effective and meaningful messaging in times of crisis and stress.

In prioritizing stakeholder interest and influence, consider the following variables:

- Power** to influence DEL
- Legitimacy** of relationship with DEL
- Urgency** of claim on DEL
- Time-sensitivity** of response from DEL
- Equity** of response from DEL



Who you gonna call?
This is the face your stakeholders see, know and trust.

Designating a Spokesperson

At least one primary and one secondary person should be designated and trained as the official department spokesperson during times of crisis. In handling crisis communications with the public and media, what the spokesperson says and how he or she says it, establishes and maintains credibility for DEL, and contributes to the public moving from crisis to resolution and recovery.

The art of being an effective spokesperson is not born, it is learned through careful preparation and practice. It requires the ability to *effectively* connect with the audience, either through the media or in person. The spokesperson should be familiar with the subject matter, but also able to talk about it in a way that communicates confidence and is understandable.

Generally, a spokesperson:

- Doesn't over reassure, and acknowledges uncertainty, fears and concerns.
- Explains that more information is being learned and when it will be shared.
- Provides guidance and resources that help people meet their needs.
- Understands and follows DEL's policies about releasing information.
- Remains calm and focused, and does not react with temper or strong emotion.
- Can talk about the issue without using jargon.
- Avoids one-liners, clichés, and off-the-cuff comments.
- Practices active listening skills and uses open body language.
- Doesn't share personal opinions.
- Doesn't promise what DEL can not deliver.
- Illustrates a point through examples, visuals, stories, and analogies that help to make the point clear and understandable.



Known, trusted spokespersons can ask the best of people, to bear the risk during a crisis, and work toward solutions.

Once a word has been allowed to escape, it cannot be recalled.

Horace, 1st century BC Greek Orator



**Did that really just happen?
Verify scope and impact and then keep track.**

It is inevitable that rumors and misinformation will grow out of crisis situations. In a crisis, the risks of inaccurate information sharing increase. And yet, this is precisely the time when people most need rapid, accurate information. Therefore, crisis information needs to be verified before sharing crisis specific messages and information. Having a system in place for rapid verification and logging communications coming in and going out is a must.

Remember that during crisis situations, people will be experiencing a wide range of emotions that can make it difficult to attend to facts that will help them understand the nature of the event and possible actions they will need to take. Keep an open mind and stay curious, calm and empathic.

Verification should come from multiple sources, such as citizens, mass media, officials, staff, legislative representatives, first responders, etc. Having a variety of perspectives helps increase situational awareness, a necessity in monitoring and directing crisis communications. Make sure to keep track of this information.



A few key points to keep in mind

- ✓ No source is infallible, so cross-check for consistency. Ask “how” your source knows what they are telling you.
- ✓ Use this time as an opportunity to both build understanding and correct misinformation.
- ✓ Keep clear records of what happened, when it happened, where it happened, how it happened, and who told you so you can go back to that source for additional clarification, if needed. The template below can be used to log event information and communications.

Crisis Event Basic Information	
Date	
Time	
Location(s)	
Description of what happened	
Injuries (if any)	
Impact of event <i>Immediate</i> <i>Short-term</i> <i>Long-term</i>	
Hazardous conditions	
Action steps or resources	
Contact	

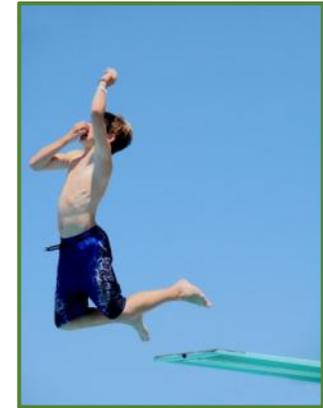


Diving into action.
Activating the crisis communication plan.

During a crisis, every decision DEL makes, every action taken, will be examined and analyzed by stakeholders. During the crucial first hours, the public forms its own opinions, based on DEL's responsiveness, and these can be nearly impossible to change. So, remember to:

- Communicate early, often, openly and honestly.
- Show compassion, and be sure DEL is doing everything possible to improve the situation.
- Be consistent in the message.
- Monitor public opinion using all technology (chat rooms, message boards, discussion groups, surveys).
- Follow up with public opinion surveys and employee questionnaires to learn from mistakes.

The following steps do not necessarily happen in this order, but each one is important and part of a coordinated approach.



ASSEMBLE the crisis communication team

Leadership gets the ball rolling and pulls the team together, including the spokesperson.

CONNECT with media contacts, social network platforms, crisis response partners

Timing is everything. Get front and center with a general statement, crafted earlier for just this situation.

ESTABLISH a base of operations if necessary

If the crisis covers large regions or multiple sites, centralizing resources may be necessary.

GATHER accurate information and verify source

This is a continuous process. The team should track on any information, news, comments, rumors, or concerns from multiple sources.

UPDATE generic messaging to include what is now known and state time when more will be shared

Summarize verified information. Include details to be released to the media. Remember to check for consistency across all messages.

NOTIFY key stakeholders in order of priority

Keep stakeholders up-to-date during a crisis. This helps quiet rumors, maintain morale and ensure continued operations.

MONITOR crisis and update messages based on the crisis

Things change rapidly in a crisis. Remember to keep all messages updated across all platforms. Consistency is key!



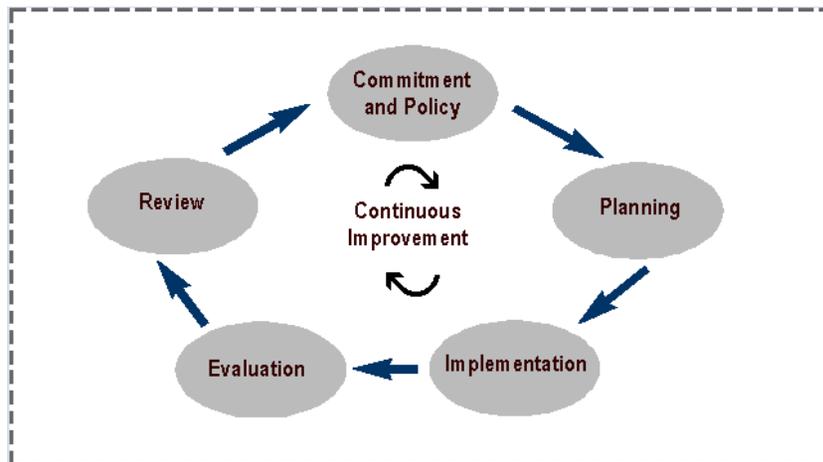
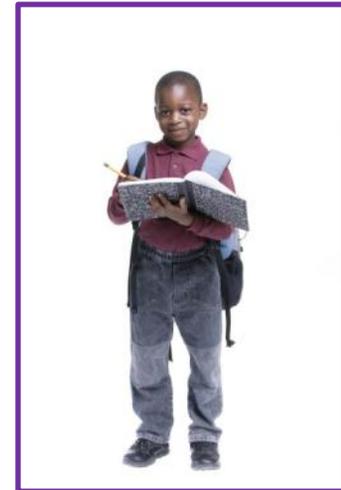
After the crisis: what did we learn?

Take the time to debrief and change your plan as needed. Learning is life-giving.

Lessons Learned

After the crisis is over, bring the team back together to debrief what worked well and what could be improved upon in the communication plan. The results are useful to share with stakeholders and partners to help with closure of the crisis incident. It also shows stakeholders and partners that DEL took the crisis very seriously, and is putting safeguards in place to lessen the chance of such a crisis happening again. Some items to consider:

- Did communication to and from stakeholders such as citizens, news media, staff and crisis response partners flow smoothly before, during and after the crisis? Look for places where there were unexpected bumps, or places where connecting was streamlined and well-supported.
- Did the formal partnership agreements drafted before the crisis meet the needs and requirements for initiating and maintaining proactive responses?
- Identify key success factors and weak points in managing crisis communication. Getting a clear picture of what worked well and what needs improvement informs future prioritization of resources.
- Compare this event to similar scenarios. What was different in that response? What strategies could be applied to an updated crisis communication plan?



Lessons Applied

Crisis communication plans are meant to be flexible and adjusted as needed. This does not mean making changes indiscriminately! After identifying the top one or two problems, gather the stakeholders most affected the problem and:

- Identify the root cause of the problem
- Brainstorm possible causes and solutions
- Outline an action plan and targets for improvement
- Test the new approach

More than one try might be needed and that's okay! The lessons learned from yesterday can be applied to tomorrow.



APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION PRIORITIZATION



All stakeholders deserve thoughtful, clear communication. And, different stakeholders have different interests, attitudes and priorities.

This means messages need to be tailored for the audience, in content, format, and frequency. Effective communication ensures stakeholders get relevant information in a format that appeals and in a frequency that better meets their needs. Attending to these differences increases the positive perception stakeholders have of DEL.

There are many tools and tables that can help prioritize stakeholder communications. Two ways of categorizing are provided below:

Stakeholder Definitions and Approach

- **Advocate** stakeholders are both active and supportive. Provide action-oriented messages opportunities to get involved.
- **Dormant** stakeholders aren't ready for involvement. Grow their awareness and understanding of the issues, and reduce barriers to action.
- **Adversarial** stakeholders respond best to conflict resolution strategies that seek win-win solutions.
- **Apathetic** stakeholders need simple, key messages that increase awareness and hold the door open for collaboration.

Stakeholder Quadrant Chart



Fig 2: Stakeholder Analysis Grid: Sample Actions



APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MESSAGE MAP

(NMA The American Resource: Media and Community Crisis Communication Planning Template, developed by Widmeyer Communications, Inc.)

Scenario:

Stakeholder:

Concern:

KEY MESSAGE 1 →	KEY MESSAGE 2 →	KEY MESSAGE 3

Support Point 1.1	Support Point 2.1	Support Point 3.1

Support Point 1.2	Support Point 2.2	Support Point 3.2

Support Point 1.3	Support Point 2.3	Support Point 3.3

A **message map** is a visual aid that shows quickly anticipated responses for high concern or controversial issues. A message map:

- **Identifies** scenarios, stakeholders, and their possible concerns before the crisis hits.
- **Anticipates** questions and concerns.
- **Organizes** the team’s thinking on appropriate stakeholder responses.
- **Frames** developing messages and supporting information.
- **Promotes** open dialogue inside and outside the department.
- **Encourages** the department to speak with one voice.



APPENDIX D: SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

For Immediate Release

[Insert Date]

Contact: [Insert contact name]

[Insert phone number]

[INSERT AGENCY NAME] JOINS [INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY] IN MOURNING THE LOSS OF CHILD CARE PROVIDER WHILE EVACUATING PRESCHOOL STUDENTS DURING FLOOD

[Insert City, State] — To honor the valor and courage of [insert provider name], [insert agency name] has partnered with public-private partner [insert organization name] to establish a memorial scholarship. This scholarship can be applied for by any licensed child care provider towards continuing education in the early childhood education field, or towards child care facility improvements, starting in [insert date].

Two months ago, on [insert date], [insert provider name], died while evacuating six children under age six from her licensed family child care home during a flash flood. One child remains hospitalized, while the other five have been released from local hospitals to their families. According to [parent of child's name], "[insert provider name] always provided the best care for my son. Because of her quick thinking, he's alive today. But she's not with us now . . . her loss is a deep blow to her family, to me and my family, to many others in this community. I don't know what we'll do without her."

[insert provider's name] operated a licensed family home child care for over twenty years in [name of community]. Town businesses looked forward to the monthly field trips she took her students on, visiting each of them in turn. Parents and community members took part in chaperoning the field trips, and in taking turns to lead small group activities. For [insert provider's name], raising children was a community project, and everyone had something valuable to share and was invited and welcomed to do so.

According to [name/title], "[insert agency name] places a high priority on the health and safety of all children in care. [insert provider name] had a spotless licensing record, and had recently completed her licensing review. She had clear crisis and evacuation plans in place, which focused on the health and safety of the children in her care. She is a true hero and will be remembered and honored as such."

The [insert provider's name] memorial scholarship will be jointly administered by [insert agency name] and [insert public-private partner organization name]. A community board to review scholarship applications will be set up and child care providers and parents interested in participating on this board are invited to apply at [insert web address].

For more information, contact [insert name and contact information].



FACEBOOK MESSAGE TEMPLATE:

[Organization name] **confirms that it has received a report of** [nature of event]. **According to the information received at this time, the [event] occurred at** [time and location]. **Reports indicate that** [any confirmed information on the event] **and that** [any initial measures] **measures are being taken to ensure the safety of** [team in the country, beneficiaries or specify as appropriate]. **The** [specify plan as appropriate] **emergency plan has now been activated** [and we are doing all we can to resolve this issue].

We will be providing further information as soon as it becomes available. [Provide details on timing of any updates or briefings]. **The next** [briefing/update] **will be at** [location and/or time].

TWITTER MESSAGE TEMPLATE:

[Organization name] **confirms that it has received a report of** [nature of event]. **According to the information received at this time, the [event] occurred at** [time and location]. We will continue to send updates as they are available.

ANOTHER SAMPLE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PRESS STATEMENT:

Retrieved from <http://www.acacamps.org/members/toolkit/crpressrelease>

Our hearts are broken by the loss of this child, and our condolences go out to the parents and extended family of this little boy. He was an outstanding young man and a great camper. This is a great loss for his family and for our camp family.

Here at XXXX Camp, we are accredited by and follow the health procedures of the American Camp Association, and we keep detailed health records as required by ACA. We have combed these records and talked with our staff and find no evidence of any reports from campers or staff that this child received any kind of bite while at camp or on any of our trips this summer. The health and safety of our campers is our first and foremost concern.

We have been in touch with the family and with The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. The CDC had representatives from their Rabies Division studying this case. I spoke with the CDC this morning, and they do not feel that this camper contracted rabies while he was at camp this summer. I would suggest that you contact the CDC concerning their findings and recommendations. We continue to cooperate fully with all authorities in this heart-breaking situation. The CDC phone number is XXX+XXX-XXXX.



APPENDIX E: TEMPLATE FOR GATHERING CRITICAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Response time is delayed when searching for current contact information and this can make a crisis much worse. Part of any crisis communication planning includes developing a comprehensive list of all necessary contacts by stakeholder group and priority level (see p.8). It is also useful to note their role in the crisis communication planning – for example, will they receive messages only, or will they share messages? Will they respond directly to the crisis or will they observe? The tool below is a suggested template. Add categories as needed to reflect the unique resources and partnerships in the region or community considered in the planning process.

Stakeholder Group	Contact Information	Role in Crisis Communication
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer
	Name: Email: Cell: Secondary Cell:	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sender <input type="checkbox"/> Responder <input type="checkbox"/> Observer



APPENDIX F: USEFUL RESOURCES

Stakeholder Salience. An additional article describing several ways of defining and prioritizing stakeholders.

<http://stakeholdermap.com/stakeholder-analysis/stakeholder-salience.html>

Responding to Community Outrage. Strategies for effective risk communication.

<https://cdpecontent.wsu.edu/lms/courses/2014-summ/2014-summ-ONLIN-COM-562-4193-LEC/resources/RespondingtoCommunityOutrage.pdf>

Verifying Information with Social Media. Social media usefulness in communication strategies.

<http://www.continuityinsights.com/articles/2013/01/verifying-information-social-media>

It's Time to Update the Definition of a Web Site. Short article on the website as a function, not a technological tool, of business.

<http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2293329/Its-Time-to-Update-the-Definition-of-a-Website>

Verification Fundamentals-Rules to Live By. Discussion on the importance of verifying sources before publishing communications.

<http://verificationhandbook.com/book/chapter2.php>

Creating a Crisis Communications Strategy. A useful read with tools on the process of crisis communications planning.

<http://web.undp.org/comtoolkit/crisis/crisis-core-concepts-strategy.shtml>

Four rules for handling a public safety crisis situation. An interesting take on public communications, image, and the role of journalists.

<http://www.prweek.com/article/1273853/four-rules-handling-public-safety-crisis-situation>

Six Steps to Preparing a Rudimentary Crisis Communication Plan. A solid article to help build a case for crisis communication planning.

http://www.nku.edu/~turney/prclass/tips/crisis_planning.pdf

Five Crisis Communication Plan Essentials. An easy read that quickly outlines the bare bones of what is needed.

<http://blog.investorrelations.com/2011/12/13/five-crisis-communication-plan-essentials/>

Squeaky Wheels and Stakeholder Research. Another way of prioritizing stakeholders for maximum efficiency.

<http://www.instituteforpr.org/squeaky-wheels-and-stakeholder-research/>

The Art of Being a Spokesperson or Being Good at Being Verbal. Tips for preparing for public appearances, media interviews, presentations.

http://www.disaster-resource.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=316:the-art-of-being-a-spokesperson-or-being-good-at-being-verbal&catid=9:crisis-response

