



# CERC Community Engagement

## August 8, 2018

Kellee Waters

Senior Health Communication Specialist



Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
Office of Public Health  
Preparedness and Response  
Division of Emergency Operations

# Purpose

CERC principles can help you provide the public with information to make the **best decisions** within incredibly **challenging time constraints** and to accept the **imperfect nature of choice**.

The **right message** at the **right time** from the **right person** can save lives.

# Introduction to Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication



Public health must be ready 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to protect people from health threats—whether these threats are global or domestic, natural or deliberate.

# What is CERC?

CDC's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) manual was first published in 2002 to provide an approach to health communications during emergencies based on experience and psychological and communication sciences.

# Six Principles of CERC

Fully integrated CERC helps ensure that limited resources are managed well and can do the most good at every phase of an emergency response.

1



## Be First:

Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information often becomes the preferred source.

2



## Be Right:

Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.

3



## Be Credible:

Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during crises.

4



## Express Empathy:

Crises create harm, and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling, and the challenges they face, builds trust and rapport.

5



## Promote Action:

Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.<sup>3</sup>

6



## Show Respect:

Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.

# The CERC Rhythm

## Engage Community • Empower Decision-Making • Evaluate

### Preparation

- Draft and test messages
- Develop partnerships
- Create plans
- Determine approval process

### Initial

- Express empathy
- Explain risks
- Promote action
- Describe response efforts

### Maintenance

- Explain ongoing risks
- Segment audiences
- Provide background information
- Address rumors

### Resolution

- Motivate vigilance
- Discuss lessons learned
- Revise plan

Community Engagement

# Lesson Overview

- Communities in the context of an emergency
- Types of community relationships
- Community engagement in the CERC Rhythm
- Levels of community engagement
- Tips for community engagement

# Community Engagement Goal

To provide the most people with information they need to make decisions and take actions.



# “Communities” in CERC

Any group of people associated by a common tie or interest.

# Advocates, Ambivalents, Adversaries

Type of Stakeholder	Characteristics	Communication Objective
Advocates	Loyal to and supportive; trust your guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain relationship.</li><li>• Engage advocates to spread your organization's prevention messages.</li></ul>
Ambivalents	Do not strongly support or oppose your organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify specific needs and interests to engage and encourage.</li><li>• Work with trusted spokespersons.</li></ul>
Adversaries	Do not support your organization; distrust or compete with your goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine whether activities could cause harm or affect other communities.</li><li>• Acknowledge concerns.</li><li>• When possible, work with trusted spokespersons.</li></ul>

# Levels of Community Engagement

Low Engagement	Medium Engagement	High Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Website updates</li><li>• Microsite for web syndication</li><li>• Social media posts</li><li>• Press releases</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newsletters</li><li>• Email blasts</li><li>• Teleconferences</li><li>• Webinars</li><li>• Scheduled social media chats</li><li>• Radio PSAs</li><li>• Fact sheets and billboards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advisory groups</li><li>• Community forums</li><li>• Hotlines</li><li>• Press conferences and telebriefings</li></ul>

# Anger in the Context of an Emergency

1. When people have been hurt.
2. When people feel threatened by risks not of their own making.
3. When people sense their fundamental beliefs are being challenged.

# Empower Decision Making

- Allow the community to participate in finding solutions
- Allow people to persuade themselves



# Sources of Social Pressure

- What will I gain?
- What will it cost me?
- What do those important to me want me to do?
- Can I actually carry it out?

# Empower Group Decision Making

- Identify alternatives
- Analyze alternatives
- Present all scientific information
- Choose **"want"** versus **"must"** criteria
- Reach a clear, justifiable decision

# Ask Questions

- What is most important to your community when faced with a problem?
- What are specific risks/benefits associated with different solutions?

# Resources

- CERC Website
  - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/>
- Additional Inquiries
  - [cercrequest@cdc.gov](mailto:cercrequest@cdc.gov)



Questions?



**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**  
Office of Public Health  
Preparedness and Response  
Division of Emergency Operations