Zika Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Discussion:
Community Engagement

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

What the public seeks from your communication

Five public desires

1. Gain wanted facts.

2. Empower decision making.

3. Be involved as a participant, not spectator.

4. Provide watch guard over resource allocation.

5. Recover or preserve well-being and normalcy.

Community engagement: Empowering

- More than involvement—community ownership comes from community empowerment
- Power is shared
- Encourages discussion and debate
- Understand the forces at work in the community

Increasing Level of Community Involvement

OUTREACH

Communication flows from one to the other, *to inform*

Provides community with information.

Entities coexist.

Outcomes:
Optimally, establishes communication channels and channels for outreach

CONSULT

Communication flows to the community and then back, *answer seeking*

Gets information or feed-back from the community.

Entities share information.

Outcomes: Develops connections

INVOLVE

Communication flows both ways, participatory form of communication

Involves more *participation* with community on issues.

Outcomes: Visibility of partnership established with increased cooperation

COLLABORATE

Communication flow is bidirectional

Forms *partnerships* with community on each aspect of project from development to solution.

Outcomes:
Partnership building, trust building

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Empower Group Decision-making

- Identify alternatives

- Analyze alternatives

- Present all scientific information

- Choose "want" versus "must" criteria

- Reach a clear, justifiable decision

Acting Trustworthy

- Share information early
- Acknowledge the concerns of others
- Under-promise and over-deliver
- Select a spokesperson who is never condescending
- Use third-party validators/advocates

Why do people come to the town hall?

Let's change our approach

Convening a Citizen's Forum

- Acknowledge concerns
- Encourage fact-finding
- Share power
- Act trustworthy
- Offer contingent commitments

Don't lecture at the Townhall

- Easy but not effective
- Doesn't change thoughts/behaviors
- Key: don't give a solution, rather help audience discover solution by asking questions

Patterns in public comment

- Spiral of silence—fear of social isolation encourages people to express or repress their opinion depending on dominant view in the venue
- Less true engagement if participants believe their input has been asked for too late in the process to make a difference in pending decisions

Public comment patterns cont.

- May attend to "put their finger in the wind"
- Offer support to neighbors or friends
- Psychological relief that they are at least "trying to do something"
- Less control over risk the greater the concern
- May be viewed as ritual, promote cohesiveness, manage stress, and encourage socialization

Causes of conflict: perception by either party of

- Superiority
- Injustice
- Distrust
- Vulnerability
- Helplessness

High-Outrage Public Meetings

"Do's"

- The best way to deal with criticism and outrage by an audience is to acknowledge that it exists. (Don't say, "I know how you feel.")

- Practice active listening and try to avoid interrupting.

- State the problem and then the recommendation.

High-Outrage Public Meetings

"Don'ts"

- Don't take personal abuse. You represent your agency and you are not alone. Bring along a neutral third party who can step in and diffuse the situation.

- Don't look for one answer that fits all and don't promise what you can't deliver.

Community Hardiness

Community hardiness: Defined

- Existing protective qualities and vulnerabilities that will determine the community's ability to take deliberate, meaningful, and collective action against a public health threat

  - Protective qualities: robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, & rapidity

  - Vulnerabilities: susceptibility related to sense of community, shelter, sustenance, security, and growth from adversity

Community hardiness: Factors

- Socioeconomic status

- Community-based organizations

- Health care capacity

- Social stressors (racial, economic, political strife)

- Political and civic perspectives

- Community cohesion and group self-efficacy

Resilience, Hardiness, Coping

- Ability to bounce back or not take an expected decline in functioning because of a harmful event

- Most research now shows that resilience is the result of individuals being able to interact with their environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors

- Some indication that there's a cultural component—not personality trait (indigenous people)

Six Principles of CERC

- **Be First:** If the information is yours to provide by organizational authority—do so as soon as possible. If you can't—then explain how you are working to get it.

- **Be Right:** Give facts in increments. Tell people what you know when you know it, tell them what you don't know, and tell them if you will know relevant information later.

- **Be Credible:** Tell the truth. Do not withhold to avoid embarrassment or the possible "panic" that seldom happens. Uncertainty is worse than not knowing—rumors are more damaging than hard truths.

Six Principles of CERC

- **Express Empathy:** Acknowledge in words what people are feeling—it builds trust.

- **Promote Action:** Give people things to do. It calms anxiety and helps restore order.

- **Show Respect:** Treat people the way you want to be treated—the way you want your loved ones treated—always—even when hard decisions must be communicated.

Trust and Mistrust

- Stakeholders judge the response to an issue or crisis based on trust.

- Trust is the natural consequence of promises fulfilled.

- Mistrust is an outgrowth of the perception that promises were broken and values violated.

- CDC fulfills trust by combining our best science with strong ethics and values.

Acting Trustworthy

- Share information early
- Acknowledge the concerns of others
- Under promise and over deliver
- Select a spokesperson who is never condescending
- Engage third-party validators and advocates

Risk Communication Resources

- CDC Zika website: http://www.cdc.gov/zika/
- Zika communications resources: http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/index.html
- CERC resources: http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/index.asp
- Emergency Risk Communication Training: Atlanta, August 10-12, 2016
- To sign up for the Emergency Partners newsletter to receive Zika and other updates from the CDC, please click here
- Contact cercrequest@cdc.gov for questions

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348   www.cdc.gov

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