Risk Communication Toolkit for Local Health Agencies

NJ Health
New Jersey Department of Health

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Dear Local Health Officer:

Effectively responding to a public health emergency can minimize disease and save lives. Responding efficiently and effectively to an emergency will often enhance the reputation of an organization, while a poor response can damage an organization's credibility and can put lives in danger.

Effectively communicating information to the right audience is a vital aspect of crisis communication. This Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Tool Kit is designed to assist you in properly communicating with your community prior to, during and after a crisis.

The kit is designed to provide local health agencies the resources to create their own crisis communication plan. In addition to the tool kit, we encourage you to use all resources available to you, including courses offered by the New Jersey Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) .

The CDC's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication course to help you prepare for a potential public health emergency, available online at www.cdc.gov/communication/emergency/cerc.htm.

Also, the DOH conducts a number of media and risk communications training each year. To find out more about these, contact your local LINCS agency or call DOH Risk Communication Manager Tom Slater in the division of Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories and Emergency Preparedness at 609-984-5348.

We welcome your feedback on this tool kit and, as always, thank you for continuing to be a part of our efforts to keep New Jersey residents protected and prepared.

Sincerely,

Christopher R. Rinn
Assistant Commissioner

Introduction

This “Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Tool Kit” provides detailed resource materials to assist in effectively managing and communicating during an emergency or crisis. The tool kit is specifically designed to support writing and implementing a crisis communication plan. A crisis communication plan clearly defines your goals, objectives and actions. It provides specific guidelines and instructions for communicating during emergencies.

Crisis communication is a team effort. It is essential to identify a communication team prior to an emergency. The team should be comprised of individuals from various departments to ensure your crisis plan considers the entire organization. Team members should be assigned specific duties and familiarize themselves with the tool kit.

The tool kit offers information and techniques to assist in:

- Creating your agency’s customized crisis communications plan;
- Developing a plan to respond during the all-important first 48 hour of an emergency;
- How to write quick press releases and talking points;
- How to select and prepare agency spokespersons;
- Customizing resources for your organization;
- Informing and protecting the public during an emergency; and
- Engaging partners/stakeholders to best support communication responses.

Despite shrinking resources, it is imperative that local health agencies be able to communicate with their residents, partners and stakeholders. Preparation can give your organization the critical boost necessary to ensure the public it serves is well informed and protected.

The following overview by Barbara Reynolds of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides a framework that can help guide you through the stages of a crisis and assist you in developing a communication plan that can be effectively implemented in the event of a crisis.

Overview—Crisis Communication Phases and the Crisis Communication Plan

By Barbara Reynolds, CDC

Understanding the pattern of a crisis can help communicators anticipate problems and respond effectively. For communicators, it's vital to know that every emergency, disaster or crisis evolves in phases and that the communication must evolve along with it. By dividing the crisis into the following phases, the communicator can anticipate the information needs of the media, stakeholders and the general public. Each phase has its own unique informational requirements.

For communication purposes, the phases of an emergency, disaster, or crisis include:

- Pre-crisis
- Initial
- Maintenance
- Resolution
- Evaluation

The movement through each of the phases will vary according to the triggering event. Not all crises are created equally. The degree or intensity and longevity of a crisis will impact required resources and manpower.

Pre-crisis phase

Communication objectives during the pre-crisis phase:

- Be prepared.
- Foster alliances.
- Develop consensus recommendations.
- Test messages.

This is where all of the planning and most of the work should be done. You can usually predict the types of disasters that your organization is likely to encounter. Reasonable questions can be anticipated and preliminary answers sought. Initial communication can be drafted with blanks to be filled in. Spokespersons and resources, and resource mechanisms, can be identified. Training and refinements of plans and messages can be made. Alliances and partnerships can be fostered to ensure that experts are speaking with one voice.

Initial phase
The initial phase of a crisis is characterized by confusion and intense media interest. Information is usually incomplete and the facts scattered. It's important to recognize that information from the media, other organizations and from within your organization might not be accurate. Your role is to learn the facts about what happened, to determine what your organization's response is to the problem and to verify the true magnitude of the event as quickly as possible.

There is no second chance to get it right in the initial phase of a crisis. Your organization's entire reputation is on the line; based on what you say and what you don't say; based on when you say it or that you never say it.

Communication objectives during the initial phase:

- Acknowledge the event with empathy.
- Explain and inform the public, in simplest forms, about the risk.
- Establish organization/spokesperson credibility.
- Provide emergency courses of action (including how/where to get more information).
- Commit to continued communication with stakeholders and the public.

Simplicity, credibility, verifiability, consistency and speed count when communicating in the initial phases of an emergency.

One of the best ways to limit public anxiety in a crisis is to provide useful information about the nature of the problem, and what the public can do about it. Hence, during the initial phase of an event, seek to establish your organization as a credible source of information. Even when there is little information to offer, you can still communicate how the organization is investigating the event and when more information will be available. At the very least, messages should demonstrate that your organization is addressing the issues head on - that its approach is reasonable, caring and timely.

Of course, the pressure to release information prematurely can be intense. Remember, the appropriate managers must approve all information before release to the media.

In the initial phase of a crisis or emergency, the public wants to know what they want to know *now*. They want timely and accurate facts about what happened and where and what is being done. They will question the magnitude of the crisis, the immediacy of the threat to them, the duration of the threat to them and who is going to fix the problem.
Communicators should be prepared to answer these questions as quickly, accurately and fully as possible.

Crisis maintenance
Communication objectives during the crisis maintenance phase:

- Help the public accurately understand its own risks.
- Provide background and encompassing information to those who need it. (How could this happen? Has this happened before? How can we keep this from happening again? Will I be all right in the long term—will I recover?)

The following are some thoughts about "getting a permanent seat at the table."

1. In Fiscal Year 2002, Department of Health and Human Services leadership insisted that a new and distinct "focus area" of the bioterrorism and emergency public health response cooperative agreements between the Department and the 62 project areas include separate plans and funding for public information and risk communication. This new "Focus Area F" garnered about $46 million in initial funding for states, cities and territories to plan crisis communication responses.

Reality Check: The fact is that communicators are great at their jobs but less than enthusiastic about written documentation. The linear thinkers who lead emergency response are looking for something on paper that describes what communicators "do" during an emergency. Writing the plan goes a long way toward increasing your credibility.

2. Be ambassadors of communication. Every element of your organization involved in emergency planning and response should know you by first name AND face. Meet the planners informally and ask them how they think better communication to the public, partners, and stakeholders would help them accomplish their mission.

3. Engage the leadership with straightforward objectives for communication in a crisis. (Note: most emergency operations planners think "two-way radio" when they hear the word "communication." It might be a good idea to stick with terms such as "public information," to distinguish what you do.)

4. Tell leadership how the overall response and recovery operation benefits through an investment in public information activities. Following are a few key concepts to stimulate proactive thinking:

Role of crisis and emergency risk communication:

- Customer focus
  - Acquire necessary facts.
  - Empower decision-making.
  - Be an involved participant, not a spectator.
  - Provide feedback to responders.
  - Watchguard resource allocation.
  - Recover or preserve well-being and normalcy.
- Organizational focus
  - Execute response and recovery efforts.
  - Gain support for crisis management plans.
  - Avoid misallocation of limited resources.
  - Ensure that decision-makers are well informed.
  - Reduce rumors.
  - Decrease illness, injury and deaths.
  - Avoid wasting of abundant resources.

- Contributors to a poor public response to recovery plans
  - – Mixed messages from multiple experts
  - – Tardy release of information
  - – Paternalistic attitudes
  - – No reality check on recommendations
  - – Not immediately countering rumors and myths
  - – Public power struggles and confusion
- Formula to meet customer and organization goals
  - – Execute a solid communication plan.
  - – Be the first source of information.
  - – Express empathy early.
  - – Show competence and expertise.
  - – Remain honest and open.
  - – Remain dedicated to customer.
  - – Apply emergency risk communication principles.

Any worries about "not being heard" at the table during a crisis event must be addressed in the pre-crisis planning. Don't be a wallflower – get in and get talking *now* with Emergency Operations Center (EOC) planners and leaders. Recent national events give you plenty of examples (both good and bad) to help decision-makers in your organization "get it." Your participation, education and credible execution during the planning phases will help ensure your seat at the table when a crisis hits.

(This article is from *Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication*, by Barbara Reynolds, CDC, October, 2002. The entire book is available on-line at http://www.orau.gov/cdcynergy/erc/CERC%20Course%20Materials/CERC_Book.pdf)

Developing Your Crisis Communication Plan

In this section, you will find background materials, worksheets, checklists and graphs that you can use to develop a crisis communication plan and organize your local emergency communication response capability from start to finish.

A true public health emergency will involve a number of agencies and departments, and a good plan will reflect that coordination. It should address all of the roles, lines of responsibility and resources you are sure to encounter as you provide information to the public, media and partners during a public health emergency. More than anything, your crisis communication plan is a resource of information – the "go to" place for must-have information.

The single most important thing to remember about your plan is that all elements **must be updated regularly.** It is recommended that you schedule an annual review, rather than wait until there are so many changes that the plan is useless when you take it off the shelf.

In this section you can find:

- **Creating Your Communications Team**
- **Communications Resources**
- **Joint Information Centers**
- **Crisis Communication Protocol**
- **Sample Crisis Communication Plan**

Your Crisis Communication Team and its Roles

Your crisis communication team includes your agency's key communication responders during a crisis, can be broken down into six roles. Optimally, there will be at least one person assigned to each role, however as times and finances dictate, you may need to assign more than one task per person. In a large scale crisis, you might want to go outside your own office, to bring in support from a nearby university or college, volunteers, or outside contractors. In a smaller, localized emergency, you might be able to fulfill all of these roles with just one or two staff members.

1. The Public Information Officer (Command and Control)

- Activates the plan under the direction of the local Health Officer
- Directs the work related to the release of information
- Coordinates with state and local communication partners to ensure that messages are consistent and within the scope of the organization's responsibility
- Provides updated information to the Health Officer, Emergency Operation Center (EOC) command and state responders in accordance with Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) protocols
- Advises the Health Officer and chain of command regarding information to be released, based on the organization's role in the response
- Identifies and works as liaison with spokespeople
- Reviews materials for release to media, public and partners
- Obtains required clearance of materials for release
- Determines the operational hours/days for the EOC
- Ensures that human, technical and mechanical supply resources are available to provide information to the public
- Ensures crisis communication protocol is followed

2. Content and Messages Coordinator

- Develops and establishes mechanisms to rapidly receive information from the EOC regarding the public health emergency
- Translates EOC situation reports and meeting notes into information appropriate for public and partner needs
- Works with subject matter experts to create situation-specific fact sheets, Q&As and updates
- Tests messages and materials for cultural and language requirements of special populations
- Adapts messages based on input from other communication team members and analysis from media, public, and partner monitoring systems
- Identifies additional content requirements and material development

3. Media Coordinator

- Assesses media needs and organizes mechanisms to fulfill those needs
- Triages the response to media requests and inquiries
- Ensures that media inquiries are addressed as appropriate

- Supports spokespersons
- Develops and maintains media contact lists and call logs
- Produces and distributes media advisories and press releases
- Produces and distributes materials such as fact sheets or B-roll (background video that sometimes includes interviews and sound bites)
- Oversees media monitoring systems and reports, including media Web sites for information on what is being reported and whether that information is accurate (e.g., analyzes trends, concerns and misinformation)
- Serves as a liaison from your organization to the Joint Information Center (JIC)
- Acts as a member of the field site team for media relations

4. Direct Public Outreach Coordinator

- Activates or participates in the telephone information line
- Activates or participates in the public E-mail response system
- Activates or participates in developing public service announcements (PSAs), flyers, notices and other information distributed to the public
- Organizes and manages emergency response Web site and Web pages
- Establishes and maintains links to other emergency response Web sites
- Oversees public information monitoring systems and reports including the Internet to see what information is available to the public and whether that information is accurate (e.g., analyzes trends, concerns and misinformation)
- Activates or participates in public and elected official briefings and community meetings
- Identifies special population needs related to communication

5. Partner/Stakeholder Coordinator*

- Establishes communication protocols based on prearranged agreements with identified partners and stakeholders
- Arranges regular partner briefings and updates
- Solicits feedback and responds to partner information requests and inquiries
- Oversees partner/stakeholder monitoring systems and reports including partner/stakeholder Web sites to ensure the information presented is accurate (e.g., analyzes trends, concerns and misinformation)
- Helps organize and facilitate official meetings to provide information and receive input from partners or stakeholders
- Responds to legislators, special interest group requests and inquiries

6. Media Monitoring Coordinator

- Monitors internal communications, including emails, text messages and memos.
- Monitors external communications including television, newspapers, radio, blogs and social media
- Provides feedback on qualities of communications

**See the Stakeholder/Partner Communications section of the tool kit for further definitions*

Resources for a Crisis

Most public information officers are accustomed to working with little or no budget. During a crisis, you must be able to get supplies, people, equipment and space as needed. Based on your needs assessment, summarize your needs and the procurement mechanisms. Try to connect with a part of your organization that has logistical savvy.

Take the time to learn where to get resources. Put that information in your plan. Don't wait for an emergency to start telling emergency response commanders what you need. Integrate that information into the planning. Make sure that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) plans indicate your needs for space, people, telephone lines, internet access, etc. It is essential to have more resources than you think you'll need than not enough.

Space (The first three rooms may be combined if space allows)

- A space where your communication team operates (separate from the EOC)
- A quiet space to quickly train spokespeople
- A space for team meetings
- A place to bring media on-site (separate from the EOC)
- A space for exclusive use of equipment (You cannot stand in line for the copier when crisis communication deadlines loom.)

People

- Designate and train people to either operate a 24/7 public and media information center or people needed to support a JIC as part of a local EOC.
- Identity qualified people to take phone inquiries. Consider staff from throughout the health department, as well as from partner organizations.
- Consider recruiting volunteers from the medical community to help with phones, especially infectious disease specialists.
- You can never have too many support staff. They can help you accomplish more than you can do alone.

Equipment and Other Resources

- Laptop PC
- Wireless server (air cards) and Internet access
- Telephone system
- Computer/IT technician
- Translation services
- Portable Copier
- Fax Machine
- Television
- Tables
- Calendars, flow charts, easels and bulletin board
- Standard supplies (copy paper, pens, pencils, notebooks, organizers, staplers, folders, etc)
- Reference material

Joint Information Center (JIC)

Background

A JIC is a temporary organization established to pool crisis communication among emergency responders. In a crisis, rapid communication with the media and with the general public becomes a top priority, and the JIC will be a source of information on the crisis. In addition, running communication through a JIC ensures that available information is released as quickly as possible, with consistent and accurate messages that take into account the often disparate viewpoints of each of the response organizations.

JIC Leadership

JICs are common among government agencies, especially within the law enforcement, military, and emergency response communities. Identify who in your county normally takes the lead in forming the JIC. In the event of a health emergency, such as an infectious disease outbreak or even a bioterrorist incident, health departments may assume a leading role in the creation and management of a JIC. In a crisis where law enforcement or fire departments have a lead role, the health department may have more limited responsibility, focusing on media interest as it pertains to understanding content and background on bioterrorist agents, as well as information on injuries and hospitalizations.

JIC Formation

JICs are formed on a deliberate basis; however, either by protocol or by custom, there might be one individual or office that will most likely call for the formation of a JIC. This might be the County Executive, the Coordinator of the Office of Emergency Management, fire or law enforcement authorities or someone in a similar position.

JIC Membership

The actual make up of the JIC will be dependent on the nature of the crisis. As part of your crisis communication plan, you should take steps in advance to pre-negotiate agreements with potential JIC partners and JIC leaders. It is also a good idea to have all JIC partners participate in a training session to solidify the communication plan. The following are potential partners in your JIC:

- County administration
- Law enforcement
- Fire department
- Emergency Medical Services
- NJ Department of Health (DOH)
- Hospital administrators
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (if terrorism related)
- Local elected officials
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Office of Emergency Management
- American Red Cross
- National Guard (if deemed necessary by the Governor)
- Physicians
- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

Sample Crisis Communication Plan

The following is a sample crisis communication plan. A crisis communication plan clearly defines your goals, objectives and actions. Once written, the plan offers specific guidelines and instructions for planning and communicating during emergencies. Each section offers an explanation as to what to include and a sample of what your plan could resemble once complete. Keep in mind that this information is based on an annual plan as all crisis communication plans should be updated yearly.

GOAL

The purpose of a communication goal is to set down in paper the overarching idea(s) of what you need to accomplish and to keep that in mind throughout the planning and implementation process. You may have one or multiple goals.

<u>Sample Communication Goal:</u>

Provide important public health guidance and protective measures to the public and partnering agencies in response to an emergency or crisis event in [insert county], New Jersey including any public health event that puts the public at risk for disease or negative health outcome.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The situation analysis is a brief description of the issue at hand. Someone new to the department or someone who has not been exposed to the situation should be able to read the one or two paragraph analysis and understand the issue right away. As you will be completing this plan before a bioterrorist event takes place, your situation analysis should be somewhat general in scope to include any event that could cause a public health threat. Details on a specific event can be filled in at a later date.

<u>Sample Situation Analysis:</u>

[Insert county], New Jersey is facing a public health emergency. The [insert county, local agency] has activated its emergency response plan and is taking action to address the event and protect public health and safety. Approximately [insert county population] people in [insert county, city, community] are at a potential public health risk, including [insert any special populations that may need messages different from the general public.] The public is being advised to [insert protective actions].

TARGET AUDIENCE AND STAKEHOLDERS/PARTNERS

The purpose of identifying your target audience and stakeholders/partners is to determine who will be impacted by the event, who has a “stake” or investment in the situation and who has a role in aiding in the response. It is critical to determine these in advance of an event as you will want to alert them of the situation, secure information from them and build them into your organization’s communication plan. Take note that some of these groups may fall into one or more categories.

Stakeholders are people with a special connection to you and your involvement in the emergency. They will be most interested in how the event will affect them and the populations they represent. Your stakeholders may vary somewhat according to the emergency, but keep in mind that your core stakeholders will be interested in most of the public health emergencies with which your organization becomes involved and will expect a response. Also, keep in mind that some of your stakeholders may not be supporters of your organization but are equally important. For more information on stakeholders and a list of potential stakeholders, see the Stakeholder Communications section in the tool kit.

A partner may be defined as anyone with a role in aiding in the response. Each potential partner will play a specific role during the crisis, and this role should be determined and agreed upon before a crisis situation occurs. It is helpful to assess what each partner brings to the table, including strengths, weaknesses and unique abilities. For more information on partners, see the Partner Communications section in the tool kit.

Sample Target Audience:

- County, city and regional residents
- City and county officials
- Health departments
- Health department staff
- Health care community (hospitals, doctors, nurses, etc.)
- Business and community leaders

Sample Stakeholders:

- City and county residents
- Local health departments
- City and county elected leadership
- City and county administration
- City and county fire departments
- City and county law enforcement
- Health care community (hospitals, doctors, nurses, etc.)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Civic organizations and unions
- Faith-based organizations
- Business and community leaders
- Community based organizations
- Homeless shelters
- Assisted living facilities
- School districts
- Local Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)
- Ethnic organizations
- Statewide, regional and local general and ethnic media

Sample Partners:

- Local health departments
- Emergency management personnel
- Public health emergency response personnel
- City and county elected leadership
- City and county administration
- Local and regional emergency services
- City and county fire departments
- City and county law enforcement
- Local Red Cross
- County mental health
- Health care community (hospitals, doctors, nurses, etc.)

Sample Partners continued…:

- Private industry
- Volunteer response organizations
- Faith-based partners

OBJECTIVES

Developing objectives help you to focus your actions toward meeting a concrete target of what you need to accomplish in order to be successful in reaching your goal(s). Objectives should be measurable and quantifiable and directed toward achieving the overall goal.

Sample Objectives:

- Effectively communicate public health information to residents of [insert jurisdiction] during a crisis event or potential threat via media, social media networks, public information hotlines and Web site.
- Position the [insert county, local public health department, LINCS Agency etc…] as a trusted source and subject matter experts on public health.
- Maintain a safe and orderly process during and after the crisis.

STRATEGIES

The strategy is an overarching statement that describes the approach you will take to achieve your goals and objectives. You may have several strategies, but each of them should clearly state a key outcome you expect to achieve.

Sample Strategies:

- Develop the infrastructure, capacity and tools needed for an effective emergency response in [insert jurisdiction].
- Pre-establish internal resources and processes for responding in a crisis to ensure the most efficient and effective communication system possible.
- Coordinate with federal, state and local agencies to protect public health.
- Gain public confidence in [insert jurisdiction] by providing information that is timely, accurate, empathetic and credible.
- Access and develop communication strategies for reaching special populations.

TACTICS/ACTIVITIES

Tactics are the action items that will successfully allow you to meet your goals and objectives. Consider this the “to do” section of the crisis communication plan. The bulk of your work before, during and after a crisis event will come from here. You may consider adding subsections under each tactic to make the document as detailed as possible. For more information on how to develop tactics to include in your crisis communication plan, see the Message and Spokesperson, Media Outreach and Direct Public Outreach sections in the tool kit.

Sample Tactics:

Pre-Event Phase

- Identify and communicate with your crisis communication team, including:
  – Public Information Officer/Risk Communication Lead – overall communication lead
  – Content and Message Coordinator – chief writer for all public information
  – Media Coordinator – media liaison and contact person for team
  – Direct Public Outreach Coordinator – manager for all direct communication other than media to include website and hotlines
  – Partner/Stakeholder Coordinator – chief liaison with partners and stakeholders
  – Rumor Control Coordinator – monitor and evaluator for all external and internal communication

- Determine your resources.
  – Identify space, people and equipment needed in the event of a crisis.

- Create a crisis protocol and timeline.
  – Match specific tasks with members of crisis team and outline timeframe.

- Set up a crisis hotline.
  – Ensure information includes things residents can do in an emergency.
  – Provide information in both English and Spanish.
  – Designate a staff member to maintain and monitor the hotline.

- Set up a crisis Web site.
  – Ensure information includes things residents can do in an emergency.
  – Provide information minimally in both English and Spanish.
  – Provide links to additional resources, including the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) and the CDC.
  – Designate a web master to maintain and monitor the web site.
  – Consider low literacy materials.

- Identify and train spokespersons.
  – Training includes key message coaching, interview techniques and probable Questions and Answers (Q&A). A refresher course should be provided every six months.

- Adapt template media materials and develop media contact lists, including:
  – Press statement and news release
  – Facts sheets on all potentially relevant topics
  – Contact information for local television stations, radio stations and newspapers
  – Media call log to track inquiries during a crisis

- Determine stakeholder/partners and foster alliances.
  – Coordinate and communicate with stakeholders and partners.
  – Establish crisis action plan for partners to ensure quick communication.

Event Phase

- Verify the situation

Get the facts from your public health organization/partners

– Obtain information from additional sources such as law enforcement, fire departments, hospitals or the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) to put the incident in perspective.
– Ascertain information origination and determine credibility.
– Review and critically judge all information.
– Determine whether the information is consistent with other sources in other markets.
– Determine whether the characterization of the event is plausible.
– Clarify information through subject matter experts (SMEs).
– Attempt to verify the magnitude of the event and human impact.

- Conduct notification.
  – Follow established communication protocol.
    - Make sure your [Health Officer and Health Executive, other officials] are aware of the situation. Get his or her authorization to proceed.
    - Contact key personnel and provide briefing on issue.
    - Contact your New Jersey Department of Health (DOH), Office of Communication or Risk Communications partners.

- Conduct assessment/Activate crisis communication plan
  – Continue to gather and check the facts.
  – Determine who is being affected by the crisis. What are their perceptions? What do they want and need to know?
  – Determine what the public should be doing.
  – Activate plan to join Joint Information Center (JIC) or begin emergency communication operation.
  – Activate your communication team with a call down list.
  – Activate crisis web site, hotlines and approved materials and fact sheets.
  – Activate spokesperson(s).
  – Activate media monitoring.
  – Activate Internet monitoring.
  – Monitor what is being said about the event. Is the information accurate?

- Organize assignments.
  – Determine the current priorities.
  – Identify subject matter experts.
  – Decide whether communication should operate 10, 12, 20 or 24 hours a day.
  – Decide whether communication should operate 5, 6 or 7 days a week.

- Prepare information and obtain approvals for release.
  – Determine special populations.
  – Prepare initial media statement.
  – Develop incident Q&A.

– Draft and obtain approval on initial news release.
– Confirm media contact list.

- Release initial information to media, public and partners through arranged channels.
  – Distribute news release to media contacts via E-mail or blast fax.
  – Staff hotline (if applicable).
  – Upload media materials produced to date to your Web site.
  – Ensure spokesperson(s) are standing by for potential media inquiries.
  – Distribute media materials to partner/stakeholder organizations. Establish regular briefing schedule and protocols with them.
  – Establish regular briefing schedule and protocols for working with the media.

- Update media with new information.
  – Send follow-up release with additional incident information and details of any scheduled news conferences/media briefings.
  – Create additional materials including fact sheet and media advisory for news conferences/media briefings, as necessary.

- Conduct news conference.
  – Secure place and determine time.
  – Notify media of scheduled news conference.
  – Gather information addressing unanswered journalist questions.

- Disseminate additional information.
  – Send additional information to media, as available.
  – Continue to monitor media coverage.

Post-Event Phase

- Obtain feedback and conduct crisis evaluation.
  – As soon as feasible following a crisis, conduct an evaluation of the organization's response.
  – Compile and analyze media coverage.
  – Conduct a "hot wash" (an immediate review of what went right and what went wrong) to capture lessons learned.
  – Share results within your agency.
  – Determine need for changes to the crisis and emergency risk communication plan.
  – Determine need to improve policies and processes.
  – Institutionalize changes with appropriate training.
  – Revise crisis plan policies and procedures based on lessons learned.

- Conduct public education.
  – Once the crisis has subsided, your department may need to carry out additional public education activities, especially with partners such as mental health. Ask the following questions.
    - ▪ What are the public's perceptions and information needs related to the crisis?

- Do you need to focus on "worried well" (psychosomatic) individuals and other mental health messaging?
- Do you need to update your community on the crisis status through town hall meetings, flyers or other outreach activities?

TIMELINE

A timeline helps you plan out what needs to be done, when and by whom. One way to complete this section is to start in reverse. In other words, if one of your goals is to have a complete crisis communication plan by May, you can start there and work backwards to incorporate all of the tactics that need to be accomplished. Depending on the timeframe you are working with, you may want to be more or less specific with dates. Remember to include as much information here as possible.

The following sample timeline assumes that the county is at the beginning phase of writing a communication plan. For those counties that already have crisis communication plans in place, the timeline should reflect the work that has been done to date. Samples and templates of all referenced documents can be found in the tool kit.

<u>Sample Timeline</u>:

Month	*Activity*
November	Strategy and Planning • Review the "Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Tool Kit" and complete resource sheets and worksheets. • Meet with your Supervisor, Health Officer and Health Executive. • Identify and communicate with your crisis communication team. • Develop a crisis communication plan and revise based on feedback.
December	Logistical Tools • Create a crisis protocol and timeline. Resources • Set up capabilities for crisis hotline. • Set up capabilities for crisis Web site. Spokesperson • Identify spokespersons.
January	Key Messages • Become familiar with key messages and potential Q&A and begin adapting to local needs. Media Lists • Compile local media contact information. • Create media call log.

February	Resources • Create content for Web site and/or identify appropriate links. • Create content for hotline. Media Materials • Compile information for emergency/crisis fact sheets. • Become familiar with template media statement, media alert and news release and begin adapting to local needs. • Begin drafting fact sheets. • Begin drafting biographies for spokespersons. Partners/Stakeholders • Enlist support of partners and stakeholders.
March	Resources • Upload information to Web site (only if not live). • Record information to hotline (only if not live). Media Materials • Route template materials, fact sheets and biographies for spokespersons through designated approvals and finalize. Partners/Stakeholders • Conduct meeting to discuss crisis plan and receive feedback. • Update plan according to feedback.
April	Spokesperson • Conduct message review and media training with spokespersons. • Conduct mock media interviews and mock press conference using potential Q&A. Partners/Stakeholders • Implement partner/stakeholder programs as needed.
May	Planning and Strategy • Conduct ongoing maintenance of crisis plan. • Update materials as needed.

MEASUREMENT

The measurement section is a tool to help you gauge the success of your plan after a crisis event. You will want to include several benchmarks and measurement devices to evaluate your work and compare them to your original goals and objectives. Keep in mind that these measurement devices are more likely to be quantitative rather than qualitative and can be used in order to conduct an effective evaluation.

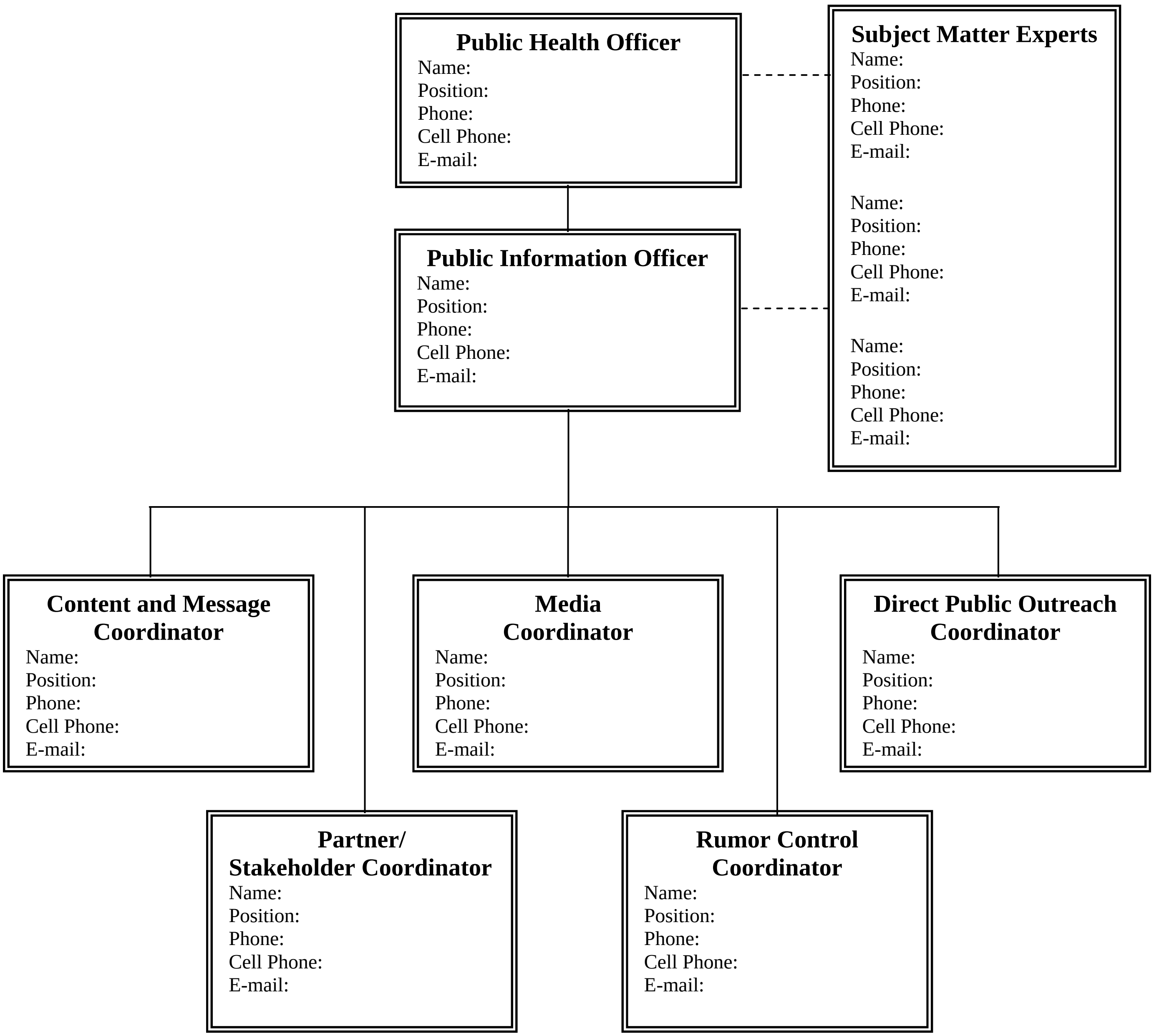
<u>Sample Measurement:</u>

- Amount and quality of media coverage (i.e., were the messages consistent and did they come across in coverage?)
- Number of calls to the hotline or number of hits on the Web site
- Quality of documented feedback from target audience (i.e., were the majority of people informed and calm or ill-informed and panicked?)
- Number of stakeholders/partners communicated with and quality of relationship

Worksheet: Assembling Your Crisis Team

Use this chart to plan staffing for your local crisis and emergency risk communication team. Do not forget to consider individuals from outside your department including, state/county/local partners, volunteers, contractors and other government agencies.

People who will play a leading role in your crisis communication team:



Worksheet: Organizing Your Resources

In many crisis situations, joining a Joint Information Center (JIC) will be the answer to your resource needs. However, some public health emergencies that can tax your organization may not trigger the operation of a JIC. Although your department may be setting up an Emergency Operation Center (EOC), you will need a separate space from which to run your communication operation. For more information on how to train and organize in a crisis event, see the Crisis Communication Plan section of the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Tool Kit.

Resources you will need to successfully execute a crisis communication plan:
(Check all that apply)

Space (The first three rooms may be combined if space allows.)

☐ Room/space for your communications team to work
Location: ______________________________

☐ Room/space for quickly training spokesperson(s)
Location: ______________________________

☐ Room/space for holding team meetings
Location: ______________________________

☐ Separate room to house media on-site
Location: ______________________________

☐ Room/space for housing equipment, exclusive for your use (You cannot stand in line for the copier when crisis communications deadlines loom.)
Location: ______________________________

☐ Restroom and (preferably) kitchen facilities
Location: ______________________________

People (These people will supplement the members of the crisis communication team.)

☐ Staff for public and media information center or JIC support

1. ______________________________
Name Position Telephone E-mail

2. ______________________________
Name Position Telephone E-mail

Please complete this worksheet by hand or electronically with the CD-ROM and place in "Completed Worksheets" section in back of tool kit.

3. ____

Name | Position | Telephone | E-mail

4. ____

Name | Position | Telephone | E-mail

5. ____

Name | Position | Telephone | E-mail

Equipment and Other Resources

- ☐ Telephone system

____

Name | Position | Telephone | E-mail

____

Company | Contact | Telephone | E-mail

- ☐ Computer/IT technician

____

Company | Contact | Telephone | E-mail

- ☐ Language services
  - ✓ Translators for simultaneous translations
  - ✓ Translators for written translations
  - ✓ Back-up translators located outside your immediate area (in case of widespread power outages)

____

Company | Contact | Telephone | E-mail

- ☐ Fax Machine and Copier

____

Company | Contact | Telephone | E-mail

- ☐ Televisions

____

Company | Contact | Telephone | E-mail

Please complete this worksheet by hand or electronically with the CD-ROM and place in "Completed Worksheets" section in back of tool kit.

☐ Tables

Company Contact Telephone E-mail

☐ Standard supplies (copy paper, pens, pencils, notebooks, organizers, staplers, folders, etc)

☐ Calendars, flow charts, easels and bulletin board

☐ Reference material

Please complete this worksheet by hand or electronically with the CD-ROM and place in "Completed Worksheets" section in back of tool kit.

Worksheet: Identifying Your Local JIC (not led by a health department)

Identify who in your county normally takes the lead in forming a Joint Information Center (JIC). JICs are formed on a deliberate basis; however, either by protocol or by custom, there might be one individual or office that will most likely call for the formation of a JIC. This might be the County Administrative Officer, the Coordinator of the Office of Emergency Services, fire or law enforcement authorities or someone in a similar position. For more information on the roles and function of JIC members, see page 184 in The CDC Crisis Emergency Risk Communication Tool Kit.

County departments or other agencies within the county that may play a leading role or be part of a JIC:

1. ____

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

2. ____

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

3. ____

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

4. ____

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

List agreements that are required for joining a JIC organized by someone outside the local health department:

1. ____

2. ____

Are agreements on file: Yes __________ No __________

Explain steps that need to be taken to secure agreements, if necessary.

____

____

____

____

Date Authorized By:

Worksheet: Organizing Your JIC (led by a health department)

In the event of a public health emergency, such as an infectious disease outbreak or even a bioterrorist incident, local health departments may assume a lead role in the creation and management of a Joint Information Center (JIC). To prepare your agency for that responsibility, use this form to identify who in your department and in the county would play a key role in a health emergency JIC.

_______________________________ Local Health Department
(Name of County)

The person leading the health emergency JIC will be:

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

The person organizing the health emergency JIC will be:

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

Depending on the type of health emergency, other members of the JIC would include:

1.

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

2.

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

3.

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

4.

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

5.

Name	Position	Telephone	E-mail

Date	Authorized By: (Health Officer/Health Director)

Please complete this worksheet by hand or electronically with the CD-ROM and place in "Completed Worksheets" section in back of tool kit.

Principles of Risk Communication in a Crisis

Be first. Be right. Be credible.
In a crisis, people make decisions differently. They simplify, and cling to current beliefs. They remember what they see or have previously experienced, which means that first messages carry more weight. So in a crisis, we initially communicate:

- Simply
- Timely
- Accurately
- Repeatedly
- Credibly
- Consistently.

We can build trust and credibility by expressing:

- Empathy and caring
- Competence and expertise
- Honesty and openness
- Commitment and dedication.

Be careful with risk comparisons. Risk communication experts say the true risk and the perceived risk can be quite different. The source of the risk can be as troubling as the degree of risk. Be careful not to compare a high outrage, low hazard risk to a low outrage, high hazard risk.

Bioterrorism is, for most people, low hazard, high outrage. In other words, a bioterror incident isn't likely to happen but the perceived outrage of one is very high. It can't be compared with a high hazard, low outrage risk like driving a car.

Here is a risk comparison that could work: "Research indicated that, in Hawaii, a person is 10 times more likely to be killed by brain damage from a falling coconut than to be killed by a shark." In this case, the risks are both natural in origin, fairly distributed, exotic, and outside the control of the individual.

Don't over-reassure. A high estimate of harm modified downward is much more acceptable to the public than a low estimate of harm modified upward. Tell people how scary the situation is; even though the actual numbers are small, and watch them get calmer.

Put the good news in subordinate clauses. A good approach is to put the good news in subordinate clauses, with the more alarmist side of the ambivalence in the main clause. Example: "It's too soon to say we're out of the woods yet, even though we haven't seen an increase of H1N1 cases in New Jersey this week."

Acknowledge uncertainty. Acknowledging uncertainty is most effective when the communicator both shows his or her distress and acknowledges the audience's distress: "I wish I could give you a definite answer on that."

A word about panic. Generally, bad news doesn't cause panic. People generally act responsibly when reacting to an incident such as 9-11. Panic does comes from conflicting message from those in authority.

Recognize the difference in your audiences. The person who's removed from the real danger but is anticipating the high risk is much more likely to respond inappropriately than the person in the heat of the battle who is primed to act on the information and doesn't have time to mull it over. The vicarious rehearsal can be overwhelming in an emergency.

Acknowledge people's fears. When people are afraid, the worst thing to do is pretend they're not. The second worst is to tell them they shouldn't be afraid. Allow people the right to feel fear.

Give people things to do. Anxiety is reduced by action and a restored sense of control. There are three types of actions:

- Symbolic behaviors, like going to a candlelight vigil
- Preparatory behaviors, like buying water and batteries
- Contingent "if, then" behaviors, like creating an emergency family communication plan)
- Ask more of people, to share the risk. Recommend a three-part action plan:
- You must do X
- You should do Y
- You can do Z.

Crafting the initial message. Go forward as quickly as possible with what you do know.
Explain the process of discovering what you don't know. Use these tips:

- Be short
- Be relevant
- Give positive action steps
- Be repetitive
- Avoid all jargon
- Don't be judgmental
- Don't make promises that can't be kept
- Don't use humor.

Dealing with rumors. Rebut a rumor without really repeating it. Limit the rebuttal to the places where the rumor exists.

Prepare to answer these questions:

- Are my family and I safe?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who is in charge here?
- What can we expect?
- Why did this happen?
- Were you forewarned?
- Why wasn't this prevented?
- What else can go wrong?
- When did you begin working on this?
- What does this information mean?

As a spokesman:

- Know your organization's policies
- Stay within the scope of responsibilities
- Tell the truth
- Embody your agency's identity.

Stay on message:

- What's important is to remember…"
- "I can't answer that question, but I can tell you…"
- Before I forget, I want to tell your viewers…"
- "Let me put that in perspective…"

Checklist: First 48 Hours Critical First Steps After Verification

Notification:	Done
1. Use your crisis plan's notification list to ensure all of the communication chain of command is aware and know you are involved.	
2. Ensure your leadership is aware (especially if it comes from the media and not the EOC) of the emergency and that they know you are involved.	
3. Give leadership your first assessment of the emergency from a communication perspective and inform them of the next steps you are taking. *Remember: Be first, be right, be credible.*	

Coordination:	Done
1. Contact local, state, federal partners now.	
2. If potential criminal investigation, contact FBI counterpart now.	
3. Secure spokesperson as designated in the plan.	
4. Initiate alert notification and call in extra communication staff, per the plan.	
5. Connect with the EOC–make your presence known.	

Media:	Done
1. Be first: Provide a statement that your agency is aware of the emergency and is involved in the response. (Use the "Template for Prescripted, Immediate Response to Media Inquires".)	
2. Be credible: Give directions to media about when and where to get updates from your agency.	
3. Be right: Start media monitoring for misinformation that must be corrected now.	

Public:	Done
1. Trigger your public information toll-free number operation now if you anticipate the public will be seeking reassurance or information directly from your organization. (You can adjust hours of operation and number of call managers as needed.)	
2. Use your initial media statement as first message to the public.	
3. Ensure your statement expresses empathy and acknowledges their concern about the uncertainty.	
4. Give the pre-cleared facts you have and refer them to other information sites as appropriate.	
5. Remind them that your agency has a process in place to mitigate the crisis.	
6. Start public call monitoring to catch trends or rumors now.	

Partner/Stakeholders:	Done
1. Send basic statement to partners (same as media) to let them know you are thinking about them.	
2. Use pre-arranged notification systems (preferably email listserv).	
3. Engage leadership to make important first phone calls, based on your plan, to partners and key stakeholders to let them know your agency is responding.	
4. Use the internal communication system (email) to notify employees that their agency is involved in the response and that updates will follow. Ask for their support.	

Resources:	Done
1. Conduct the crisis risk assessment and implement assignments and hours of operation accordingly. (Use the "ERC Needs Assessment Checklist".)	
2. Stake out your pre-planned place in the EOC or adjoining area.	

Anticipating Questions

Use these worksheets to write anticipated questions about a specific event; then develop appropriate answers for the public and sound bites for the media.

Step 1: Review the following list of questions commonly asked by the media. The spokesperson should have answers to these questions prepared and change/update as necessary throughout the duration of the crisis:

Step 2: Using the Answer Development Model below, draft answers for the public and sound bites for the news media in the space provided below the model. Then go back and check your draft answers against the model. Don't forget that sound bites for the news media should be 8 seconds or less and framed for television, radio or print media.

Answer Development Model	
In your answer/sound bite, you should…	**By…**
1. Express empathy and caring in your first statement	• Using a personal story • Using the pronoun "I" • Transitioning to the conclusion
2. State a conclusion (key message)	• Limiting the number of words (5-20) • Using positive words • Setting it apart with introductory words, pauses, inflections, etc.
3. Support the conclusion	• At least two facts • An analogy • A personal story • A credible 3rd party
4. Repeat the conclusion	• Using exactly the same words as the first time
5. Include future action(s) to be taken	• Listing specific next steps • Providing more information about o Contacts o Important phone numbers

Choosing the Spokesperson

Candidate name: ________________________________

Qualification *To be effective, a crisis communication spokesperson must:*	**Meets**
1. Be perceived as highly credible by the news media and the public	
2. Be able to be flexible while staying on message	
3. Possess excellent communication skills	
4. Possess relevant technical knowledge about the specific crisis, its dynamics, and how it is being managed	
5. Be someone of sufficient authority to be accepted as speaking for the company	
6. Be able to express technical knowledge in a way that can be understood by the news media and the average person	
7. Be able to respond to sensitive questions	
8. Be resourceful and a quick learner	
9. Be able to make decisions regarding on the spot media responses	
10. Be able to work well under pressure	
11. Be able to accept constructive feedback	
12. Be able to recognize limitations of authority to speak and when to defer	
13. Be able to reflect appropriate tone for audience and crisis needs	

Spokesperson Checklist

Message Preparation[i]		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
1. Did you mobilize resources and staff quickly?		
2. Did you recognize that public perceptions matter more than facts?		
3. Did you seek outside help, including volunteers?		
4. Did you coordinate efforts with other emergency response organizations?		
5. Did you enlist support from credible third parties?		
6. Did you monitor and listen closely to what the news media, public officials, and other important players were saying and the questions they are asking?		
7. Did you refrain from trying to control the flow of information?		
8. Did you withhold names of injured or decreased until next-of-kin were properly notified?		

Message Content		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
1. Did you express and show concern, empathy, and compassion consistently for damages, injuries, and any inconvenience?		
2. Did you emphasize dedication, commitment, and social responsibility?		
3. Did you provide an early or immediate apology?		
4. Did you provide a list of facts and an action plan?		
5. Were you open and honest about capabilities, needs, and problems?		
6. Did you know exactly what you wanted to say to the media and did you use two key messages?		
7. Did you acknowledge responsibility but avoid placing blame?		
8. Did you indicate that investigations are under way to determine the cause?		
9. Did you tell the truth as best you knew it?		
10. Did you use examples, human-interest stories, and concrete		

Message Content		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
analogies to establish a common understanding?		
11. Did you use simple visuals and graphics as much as possible?		
12. Did you test your message content prior to delivery?		
13. Did you refrain from going “off the record?”		
14. Did you avoid saying "no comment?"		
16. Did you avoid evading statements and shifting responsibility?		
18. Did you avoid statements that imply that cost is more important than public safety, health, or environment?		
20. Did you avoid the use of technical and legal jargon?		
22. Did you avoid providing too much technical detail?		

Message Delivery		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
1. Was top management involved and visible?		
2. Did you go immediately to the scene?		
3. Were you easily accessible to the media?		
4. Did you stay calm? (not lose your temper)		
5. Did you practice what you planned to say to the media aloud and did you test it?		
6. Did you indicate that you would get back by a specific time with an answer if you did not know an answer to a question?		
7. Did you avoid conjecture and speculation ("What if" questions)?		

Nonverbal Communication		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
1. Were you sensitive to the non-verbal messages you were communicating?		
2. Did you sit up straight, showing that you are paying attention and respecting your audience?		
3. Did you make eye contact? (Avoiding eye contact can make you look deceitful. If it is very difficult to make eye contact, focus on the back of the room, not on your notes or the floor.)		

Nonverbal Communication		
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**
4. Did you avoid defensive, argumentative, and unreceptive body language (e.g., arms crossed)? Did you stand with your arms straight at your sides?		
5. Did you avoid fidgeting, shuffling papers, or playing with your pen?		
6. (Keeping your feet planted on the ground, sitting or standing still will make you look more controlled and confident.)		