



CERC Spokesperson



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

Review of CERC Introduction

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.

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.³
- 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

Spokesperson

Lesson Overview

- Qualities of a spokesperson
- The role of the spokesperson
- Tips for success

Spokesperson Qualities

- What makes a good spokesperson?



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lw87-xEwb0&feature=player_embedded

Establishing Credibility

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

Role of a Spokesperson in an Emergency

- Take your organization from an **it** to a **we**
- Build trust and credibility for the organization
- Lessen the psychological barriers within the audience
- Gain support for the public health response
- Ultimately, reduce the incidence of illness, injury, and death

Be your organization, then be yourself.

Basic CERC Rules for Spokespersons

- Avoid over-reassuring
- Acknowledge
 - Uncertainty
 - Fears
 - Shared misery
- Emphasize that a process is in place to learn more

Basic CERC Rules for Spokespersons (continued)

- Give anticipatory guidance
- Be regretful, not defensive; express wishes
- Be willing to address “what if” questions
- Ask more of people and give them things to do

Working with the Media

- Have a clear purpose for your interview
- Provide the interviewee's name and title
- Know who will be conducting the interview
- Anticipate questions
- Provide supporting materials

Pitfalls to Avoid when Working with the Media

- Having words put in your mouth
- Leading or loaded language
- Continuing after you've answered the question
- Confrontation or argumentativeness
- "No comment"

Spokespersons in Public Meetings

- Practice self-management
- Let people talk
- Ask questions
- “Yes, and”
- Respond appropriately and professionally

Tips for Success

- Tailor messages to make them easy to understand
- Gather feedback
- Remember, what you say is never off the record
- Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources
- Meet the needs of the media
- Speak clearly, with compassion and empathy
- Plan carefully and evaluate performance

DO NOT

- Use jargon
- Use humor
- Repeat criticisms
- Express personal opinions
- Show off your vocabulary



Resources

- CERC Website
 - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/>
- Additional Inquiries
 - cercrequest@cdc.gov



Questions?



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