



# **Zika Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Discussion: What the Public Needs When Risks Are Uncertain**

**Barbara Reynolds, Ph.D.**

May 17, 2016



# 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.

# Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Under promise and over deliver....

Instead of making promises about outcomes, express the uncertainty of the situation and a confident belief in the process to fix the problem and address public safety concerns.

# What the Public Will Ask First

- Are my family and I safe?
- What have you found that may affect me?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who caused this?
- Can you fix it?

# 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.



# Consequences of Mistrust

- Health recommendations ignored and disease and death go up.
- Demands for misallocation of resources.
- Public health policies circumvented.
- Opportunists prey on others in the “trust gap.”
- Fiscal and medical resources are wasted.

***We can't accomplish our mission.***

# 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](mailto:cercrequest@cdc.gov) for questions

For the latest communication resources, check

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/index.html>

**Zika Virus**

CDC > Zika Virus Home

**Communication Resources**

Language: English

CDC offers free resources including video, fact sheets, and posters. Below are links to current communication tools and resources available for use and distribution. For information and resources for specific audiences, click the "Information for Specific Groups" tab in the navigation bar to the left.

**Video Resources**

**Infographics**

**Fact Sheets & Posters**

**Digital Resources**

**Latest Tweets**

**Blogs**

- CDC Director Blog – Thoughts from CDC Director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH
- Public Health Matters – A collective blog about the exciting public health work of preventing and controlling infectious diseases that result from the interaction of people, animals, and the environment.
- NIOSH Science Blog – A scientific look at workplace safety and health issues from the

**Dr. Tom Frieden Tweets**

New @CDCMMWR. Learn how Global Measles & Rubella Lab Network supports elimination goals.  
<https://t.co/y34MSUQdzZ>

To find information on specific groups, click  
<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/specific-groups.html>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the CDC website page for 'Information for Specific Groups'. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/specific-groups.html>. The page title is 'Information for Specific Groups'. On the left, there is a navigation menu with categories such as 'Zika Virus Home', 'What CDC is Doing', 'About Zika Virus Disease', 'Prevention', 'Transmission', 'Symptoms, Diagnosis, & Treatment', 'Areas with Zika', 'Information for Specific Groups', 'Pregnant Women', 'State & Local Public Health Laboratories', 'Vector Surveillance and Control', 'State and Local Health Departments', 'Parents', 'Women and Their Partners Thinking about Pregnancy', 'For Healthcare Providers', 'Resources & Publications', and 'Communication Resources'. The main content area features a header with social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and a language dropdown set to 'English'. Below the header is a banner image showing various scenes related to Zika, including a doctor, a family, a map, and a person at an airport. The main content is organized into a grid of categories: 'PREGNANT WOMEN', 'STATE & LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS', 'TRAVELERS', 'INFORMATION FOR PARENTS', 'STATE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES', 'WOMEN AND MEN WHO ARE THINKING ABOUT PREGNANCY', 'HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS', 'LAW AND POLICYMAKERS', 'MOSQUITO CONTROL PROFESSIONALS', and 'WORKERS'. On the right side, there is a section titled 'Zika Partner Call Information' which includes a bullet point about a 'CDC Zika Update Call for the Private Sector' held on 2/19/16, with links for 'Audio file' and 'Transcript'. Below this is another bullet point about 'CDC's Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) Calls/Webinars'. At the bottom right, there is a call to action: 'For more information on Zika announcements, online resources, facts, and guidance, please subscribe to our Emergency Partners newsletter [here](#)'.

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

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

