

## ***Emergency Risk Communication Team Functions: Roles and Pre-Planning Questions***

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### **LEADERSHIP (Command and Control)**

#### **Role**

- Manages communications center
- Serves as primary communications adviser
- Serves as liaison to other key communication officers (local, State, and Federal levels, as appropriate)
- Directs the work related to the release of information to the media, partners, and the public
- Activates the plan, based on careful assessment of the situation and the expected demands for information by media, partners, and the public
- Coordinates with horizontal communication partners, as outlined in the plan, to ensure that messages are consistent and within the scope of the organization's responsibility
- Provides updates to the organization's director, EOC command and higher-level headquarters, as determined in the plan
- Advises the director and chain of command regarding information to be released, based on the organization's role in the response
- Ensures that risk communication principles are employed in all contact with media, the public, and partner information-release efforts
- Knows incident-specific policy, science, and situation
- Reviews and approves materials for release to media, the public, and partners
- Obtains required clearance of materials on policy or sensitive topic-related information not previously cleared for release to media
- Determines the operational hours/days and reassesses throughout the emergency response
- Ensures that resources are available (human, technical, and mechanical)

#### **Pre-planning Questions to Ask**

- Who will handle this function?
- How will we staff the ongoing/intense need?
- Do we have mutual aid agreements?
- What will the emergency workers' schedules be?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_director.pdf](#)

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## Content and Clearance Team

### Role

- 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
- Uses analysis from media, public, and partner monitoring systems and reports (e.g., environmental and trend analysis to determine what messages are needed, what misinformation should be corrected, identify concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)
- Drafts, edits, and finalizes terrorism-related information materials
- Works with subject matter experts to create factsheets, question-and-answer documents, and materials for new/emerging issues
- Maintains database/log of all bioterrorism information and education materials
- Tests messages and materials for cultural appropriateness
- Works with Web, partner, and public education teams to develop new materials
- Facilitates clearance of printed materials
- Maintains multiple clearance channels
- Provides subject matter experts for review
- Briefs other teams at the beginning of each day
- Distinguishes between previously cleared and new information to provide timely release of information
- Centralizes and streamlines types of written products to be produced

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- Who will staff this position?
- How will we gear up?
- What materials can we create now—before a crisis?
- What clearance channels must we follow?
- How are we going to get timely clearance?
- What backup clearance plans do we need?
- How will we staff this function for ongoing/intense need?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF assign content.pdf](#)

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## Clinician Communication

### Role

- Identifies critical groups and channels to reach them
- Prepares information/materials for clinicians
- Arranges regular updates for clinician networks
- Responds to requests and inquiries from clinicians
- Coordinates with media monitoring function

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- Who/what are our sources of information?
- How can we provide timely response to clinicians?
- Who will staff this function?
- How do we provide staffing for an ongoing/intense crisis?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_clinician.pdf](#)

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## Communication Monitoring and Research

### Role

- Oversees media monitoring systems and reports
- Identifies story trends, research, and message needs
- Helps identify public and clinician needs
- Compiles data (e.g., hotline reports, Web site usage)
- Tests messages and materials, and analyzes polls/surveys
- Provides daily updates

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- What questions need to be answered?
- What media sources will have to be monitored?
- What are the search criteria?
- Who needs to know what, when?
- What analysis do they want?
- Who will handle this function?
- How will we gear up?
- How will we staff the ongoing/intense need?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_monitor.pdf](#)

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## Community Health Education

### Role

- Helps to identify public education needs, concerns, and interests
- Helps to organize and facilitate meetings to provide input for public information campaigns
- Organizes and facilitates public information campaigns
- Works with communications research and evaluation team to evaluate education materials

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- What pre-event communication activities should we institute?
- How do we identify high-risk groups and how do we best communicate with them?
- How can our media partners help us with pre-event communication?
- What should we be doing to educate our health care providers?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_healthEd.pdf](#)

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## Government Communication

### Role

- Identifies critical groups and channels to reach them
- Distributes media materials and updates to legislators/special interest groups
- Responds to requests from legislators/special interest groups
- Arranges routine briefings and updates
- Helps organize and facilitate meetings to provide input for legislator/special interest group campaigns
- Organizes and facilitates legislator/special interest group campaigns
- Works with communications research and evaluation team to evaluate education materials

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- What are the critical government agencies and offices with which we must coordinate? (For example, the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile)
- Do we have updated contact information and how will we maintain it (e.g., Governor's public affairs officer, law enforcement, Red Cross, etc.)?
- What information should we be prepared to provide?
- What communication support/requirements do they have?
- What information can we prepare now for Government partners—before a crisis?
- Are we "plugged in" to the EOC in our region?
- What presence will you have on the EOC's Joint Information Center? (Be prepared to honor that commitment.)

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_govmt.pdf](#)

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## Hotline

### Role

The CDC has committed to providing hotline services to any U.S. jurisdiction that experiences a public health emergency. These hotline services can be monitored within 2 hours of activation. Hotline staff will be able to provide interpretation in Spanish as well as in English.

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- How do I qualify for this service?
- How do I activate this service
- Do you have a triage system to differentiate which calls are urgent?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_hotline.pdf](#)

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## Media

### Role

- Assess media needs and organizes mechanisms to fulfill these needs during the crisis (e.g., daily briefings in person versus a Web site update)
- Triage responses 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 other materials (e.g., fact sheets, B-roll)
- Ensures that risk communication principles required to build trust and credibility are incorporated into all public messages delivered through the media
- Act as a member of the joint information center or field site team for media relations
- Serve as liaison between the organization and the JIC

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- What media will you need to contact?
- Who are the points of contact?
- Do you have "back door" contact information (home numbers of key media contacts, after-hours office phone numbers)?
- Do you have complete/alternative contact information: phone, fax, e-mail address?
- Are you able to access contact information at home, while you travel, and via hard copy, as well as electronic versions?
- Who is authorized to speak to the media?
- What systems will you have to track contacts with the media?
- Do you have a triage system to differentiate which calls are urgent, who needs an interview, and what calls are routine?
- Who are your spokespersons?
  - Are they trained?
  - Do they know how to effectively use risk communication principles?
  - Do you have 24-hour contact information for your spokespersons?
- Who will staff this function?
- How will we gear up?
- Who will staff for ongoing intense coverage?
- Who will decide on press updates?
- Do you have checklists for press conferences, briefings?
- What media materials can you draft? How?
- Do you have a go kit to handle media if you are unavailable?
- With what other offices/functions/partners do you have to coordinate media coverage?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_media.pdf](#)

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## Public Health Communication / Partners

### Role

- 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 (e.g., environmental and trend analysis to determine what messages are needed, what misinformation needs to be corrected, identify concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)
- Help to organize and facilitate official meetings to provide information and receive input from partners or stakeholders
- Identifies critical groups and channels to reach them
- Arranges regular briefings and updates
- Responds to partner inquiries

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- Who are our key public health partners?
- How do we best communicate with them?
- Do we have systems to communicate with them in a crisis (e.g., listserv, broadcast fax)?
- What are their roles and responsibilities?
- What information do we need from them?
- What information do they need from us?
- Do we release information to the public together? If so, what are our agreements for how this will be done?
- Who are the partner contacts?
- Do we have alternative/emergency contact information for them (e.g., after-hours in the office, cell phones, home phones, e-mail, fax, addresses)?
- Who is responsible for building and maintaining key partner relationships?
- With what networks and other resources should we be familiar?
- Who will staff this function?
- How will we cover staffing for an ongoing crisis?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_publichealth\\_partner.pdf](#)

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## Spokesperson

### Role

- Be the "face" of the organization to the public and the media
- Present the organization's messages with empathy and caring
- Prepare to meet with the media and handle their questions
- Be knowledgeable and credible on the event and the facts to date

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- Who in the organization has established relationships and patterns of communication with affected audiences as the normal course of business?
- What spokesperson(s) selection process will we use?
- Is spokesperson training needed?
- Who does senior management want for spokesperson(s).

For a more detailed list of spokesperson qualifications and other factors to consider during pre-planning, see Choosing The Spokesperson(s) Worksheet ([WKSHEET\\_choosing\\_spokesperson.pdf](#)).

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_spokesperson.pdf](#)

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## Web

### Role

- Organizes and manages smallpox-related Web sites and Web pages
- Ensures that Internet and extranet sites are operational
- Assists in preparing documents and materials for distribution via Web sites
- Establishes and maintains links to other Web sites/pages

### Pre-planning Questions to Ask

- What are the target audiences for your Web site?
- What information is public; what must be secure?
- What can be posted?
- Who posts it?
- Who maintains it?
- What partners or other Government offices should we link to?
- How is effectiveness of this vehicle evaluated?
- Have we conducted usability testing?
- Who will staff this function?
- How will staffing for intense use during a crisis be provided?

**Sample Assignment Sheet:** [CKOFF\\_assign\\_web.pdf](#)