

Check List for Creating a Communication Strategy for Avian/Pandemic Influenza

Produced by the Pan American Health Organization



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

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Overall Objective: Develop a communication strategy and an accompanying action plan.	Overall Indicator: Communication strategy written, approved and aligned to National Pandemic Preparedness plan.
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Task	Indicator	Not		
		Yes	No	Applicable
Ensure that a communications officer (or team) is part of the National Pandemic Influenza Planning Group.	Communication officer is identified and named as part of the senior pandemic planning group.			
Define who will lead the communication efforts: current, during a pandemic, etc.	Lead agencies named and communication officer assigned			
Define target audiences for each ministry and outline objectives.	Targeted audiences and objectives identified.			
Make special plans to communicate with vulnerable groups and hard to reach populations.	Measures defined on what to provide and how to provide it in indigenous languages and actions set for isolated populations.			
Name and train spokespersons in outbreak communications.	Training completed for outbreak managers.			
Train other senior officials in risk and outbreak communication and conduct train-the-trainer sessions.	Training scheduled and completed.			
Create an internal list of how communication will be handled, by whom, to whom and what will be said. Who will communicate to the ministers, etc.	Chain of command list completed, detailing who notifies whom.			
Detail the specifics of who will do what and when regarding both internal and external reporting. (Action Plan)	Guidelines completed outlining who will speak with the other government officials, where should staff report, who defines messages, who will coordinate with the international community. Name and title of the responsible party included as well as the current contact information			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Assess current preparedness, including personnel, financial resources, equipment.	Needs assessed and plan provided for current readiness, gaps and requirements (human and financial).			
Research what the public perceives and believes about seasonal influenza, avian influenza and a potential pandemic influenza and levels of trust in different sources, including ministries.	Research completed. Baseline trust levels determined. Mechanism for feedback of research results set up to shape message development.			
Engage the community to monitor what they need and want, and inform on what the government can (and cannot) provide.	Respected community leaders identified. Meetings set up and held.			
Identify partners, such as youth groups, schools, mayors, unions, churches and associations and include them in the preparedness.	Partners identified and input sought and included in national plans			
Enlist the support of primary health care doctors, nurses, midwives and community health promoters to supply and send information.	Doctors, nurses, midwives, health promoters identified and included in discussions and plans.			
Work with celebrities and personalities used in the past in communication campaigns and get them on board. Enlist new celebrities.	Contacts made and confirmation of celebrities on board.			
Update media contact lists and databases, noting the preferred channels.	Media lists produced with updated information.			
Create preparedness messages for the public based on the research of attitudes and knowledge about influenza.	Messages created for prevention, information and protection. Clearance system for messages developed.			
Create fact sheets and news releases to explain what pandemic influenza is and how to prevent it as well as the difference between avian and seasonal influenza.	Materials produced and dissemination plans detailed for the media, doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies, clinics, schools, and government offices			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Produce public service announcements for print, television and radio to carry prevention and education messages before a pandemic and in the event a pandemic is declared.	Public service messages created and distribution plans set up.			
Select communication channels to distribute messages, such as web, radio, television, posters, loud speaker and ways to reach the largest number of people.	Plans made for distribution of materials and messages electronically, over the airwaves, posters, billboards, etc.			
Engage the media and build professional capacity and scientific understanding.	Media outreach list set up and journalism background briefings set up and held.			
Plan media training sessions that include simulations and help journalists understand the complex science.	Media training simulations designed and held.			
Define the logistics of working with the media and how materials will be sent and updates given.	Plan created for how media briefings will be held, including naming spokespersons and story strategy.			
Work on messages for the media to educate the public and encourage preparedness.	Messages produced to reinforce preparedness and keep the public informed.			
Decide how to promptly deal with and respond to rumors.	Guidelines produced to monitor and proactively address rumors and correct misperceptions.			
Set up mechanisms for communications surveillance.	Communications staff in the ministries and on the local level monitor what the media is covering and how they are covering it.			
Stage internal simulations and exercises so contingencies can be made to keep the public prepared, the government operating, and basic services available.	Simulations planned and executed. Gaps filled.			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
<p>Containment</p> <p>Put into place communications for containment phase with the goal of maintaining trust and conveying realistic expectations.</p>	<p>Predetermined plans set into action to handle public inquiries. Media teams alerted. Spokespersons report to assigned posts.</p>			
<p>Activate the outbreak communication committee and put into place tasks outlined in communication plan.</p>	<p>Prepared messages released and staff alerted following defined command and control mechanisms.</p>			
<p>Alert partners and international organizations and request assistance if required.</p>	<p>Partners and international organizations alerted.</p>			
<p>Schedule media and public briefings to maintain transparency and credibility.</p>	<p>Media alerted, briefings held, and scheduled updates set.</p>			
<p>Engage opinion leaders and partners to assist with explaining the containment phase, the needs, challenges and opportunities.</p>	<p>Partners provide back up for sharing information with various publics.</p>			
<p>Work with technical experts to explain measures and stress the importance and implications of compliance.</p>	<p>Plans outlined for possible social distancing, closing schools, home confinement, canceling of mass gatherings.</p>			
<p>Communications with the media will adhere to WHO Outbreak Communication.</p>	<p>Accurate and timely information released to maintain trust and calm fears.</p>			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Pandemic Phase Declared				
Communication team operating around the clock at the start of the pandemic with staffing providing for two people for each function.	Staffing roster posted and relief plans built in.			
Put into place prepared communication command and control actions, such as the notification system and reporting to international authorities.	Command and control procedures carried out, notifications made.			
Spokesperson provides information to the public quickly, responds to initial questions openly and rapidly.	Information released before damaging rumors start.			
Brief the technical spokesperson on crisis and outbreak communication measures that should be used in accordance with WHO's guidelines.	Spokesperson uses outbreak communication guidelines in releasing information.			
Establish a schedule for updates and releases for the media and the public.	Agenda of routine updates released.			
Release several prepared messages to the media at the start of reported human-to-human cases aimed at reducing public anxiety offering up-to-date information.	Messages aired, printed, that offer action measures for public, such as staying at home.			
Provide clear information on the threat (risk) and actions underway and those that will be taken.	Detailed risk conveyed and government actions explained.			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Work with educational and religious institutions to convey action steps and ease concern.	Schools and religious institutions speak with the public and suggest activities.			
Work with private physicians on messages they will provide to the public, and with health care workers aiding the sick.	Private doctors and health care workers provide information to patients on symptoms and measures.			
Activate communications surveillance with government communicators at all levels to monitor rumors, concerns, attitudes and actual cases.	Communication surveillance in place and measures taken to handle rumors and misperceptions.			
Put into place scheduled updates for the media and the public.	Times set for updates and questions anticipated.			
Be prepared to meet a possibly hostile media. Keep three things in mind: don't lie, don't over-reassure, and acknowledge uncertainty.	Spokespersons and technical staff respond honestly, following outbreak guidelines.			
Have top level government officials speak to the public to promote calm and reflect the level of concern.	Top government officials trained in risk and crisis communication deal effectively with the media and public.			
Release public service announcements prepared earlier to print, broadcast and radio media. It may be necessary to buy airtime now to be used during a pandemic.	Government messages aired, printed messages distributed.			
Create a channel so the public and government can share views, such as a phone hotline, radio line, internet web page.	Mechanisms set up for communication between government and public.			

Task	Indicator	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Continue research on what the public thinks and believes that the government is doing to make sure that perceptions match realities.	Research carried out.			
Enact measures to handle the elderly and isolated so that they can receive help even if they have not contracted the disease.	Vulnerable and isolated populations provided special assistance.			
Brief the public on business continuity measures and other activities that will affect their daily lives.	Business community engaged in all facets of plans.			
Alert the public on how to handle dead bodies, relying on prepared guidelines for emergency situations.	Release guidelines.			
Set up ways to alert the public that the crisis has passed and that public services will be resumed.	Government announces resumed services and update on situation.			