

## **Communication and Ebola Disease Spread Prevention**

### **Introduction**

The right message from the right person at the right time can save lives. This activity will help students:

- Recognize the importance of communicating important information in a timely manner.
- Evaluate the credibility of information that needs to be disseminated.
- Discuss cultural differences and its' impact on communication.
- Prepare empathetic communication material.

### **Purpose**

When a crisis occurs such as a pandemic or epidemic the need to communicate is immediate. Effective communication during an emergency can save lives and therefore is a critical part of an organized response to the situation. Well-conceived and effectively delivered emergency messages can help ensure public safety, protect property, facilitate response efforts, elicit cooperation, instill public confidence, and help families make decisions to ensure safety. A key decision in planning emergency communications is how the message is delivered to the audience. Therefore, knowing the audience is critical. The extent to which people respond to a message is influenced by many factors, including individual characteristics and perceptions, whether the message comes from a credible source, how the message is delivered, and the message itself. In addition, during an incident, a wide variety of communication tools are available to provide vital information to the community. Choosing the right communication tool is a matter of getting the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the right decisions. This exercise will cover the steps that are necessary for effective communication and the different types of tools that can be used to convey messages during an emergency situation.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this activity students will be able to:

- Discuss the steps taken in an infectious disease outbreak from a communication standpoint.
- Explain the differences in the types of communication tools that can be used in an emergency/crisis situation.

### **Activities**

Students will read the communication and participation topic that is a part of the digital exhibit. <http://cdcmuseum.org/exhibits/show/ebola/communicationandparticipation>

Listed below are three different types of communication tools that students will create. Creation of these documents will place an emphasis on the target audience and how it should be disseminated.

- Students will write a policy brief on the urgency of containing the spread of Ebola. The policy brief will be written to require action to be taken by addressing the importance of the problem.
  - This is a concise, stand-alone document focussing on Ebola spread prevention requiring policy attention. It is an important research product for use by decision-makers that can be effective in bridging research/evidence & policy. It has four main functions:
    - Explain and convey the urgency of the issue.
    - Present policy recommendations or implications.
    - Provide evidence to support the reasoning behind policy recommendations.
    - Point the reader to additional resources.
  
- Students will develop a press release on the Ebola outbreak.
  - A press release is an official statement delivered to members of the news media for the purpose of providing information, an official statement, or making an announcement. The press release will notify the media about any new significant develops pertaining to the Ebola outbreak.
  
- Students will create a Public Service Announcement (PSA). A PSA is a message in the public interest disseminated without charge, with the objective of raising awareness of, and changing public attitudes and behavior towards, an issue which in this case will be Ebola.
  - The PSA will address two different audiences. One audience will be adults and the additional audience will be children. Remember one of the most important parts of the PSA is the “hook”, which are words that grab the attention of the audience.