

# Crisis Communications Guidance for NC Health Care Facilities Association Members

With the world on high-alert due to the spread of the coronavirus, we recognize that many of the patients in our facilities are vulnerable to this infection. While we know you are rigorously following guidelines from local, state and federal health officials, we want you to be prepared for the possibility of an occurrence of the coronavirus in your facility.

The following information has been provided to the association by a crisis communications expert who is available to assist our facilities if necessary.

## **BE PREPARED: Plan ahead and be ready to communicate if a crisis occurs.**

Planning ahead — before a crisis hits — will enable you to communicate faster and more effectively.

- **Establish a crisis team.** Assign roles and responsibilities. Identify and train a spokesperson.
- **Identify key audiences:** Know who you need to communicate with and how to best reach them.
- **Prepare statements/resources.** Consider the types of background info you may want to share.

## **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES: Tell it first. Tell it fast. Tell it all.**

Every crisis is unique and requires a response based on specific circumstances. These guidelines apply to many crisis situations and may serve as a starting point when developing a response.

- **Take Care of Your People:** Your first priority should be your staff, your patients and their families. While it is important to share info with the media and public, focus on your people first.
- **Respond Quickly:** We live in a world where news spread quickly. It is important to get in front of developing situations to prevent the spread of incorrect or incomplete information. Whenever possible, let your most important audiences hear from you first.
- **Tell the Truth. Always:** Be accurate with the facts and pay close attention to the details. Don't provide misleading or inaccurate information, and don't speculate if you don't know the answer.
- **Correct Misinformation:** Set the record straight when incorrect information is reported.
- **Fall Forward Fast:** Address and acknowledge any oversights that have been made and emphasize the steps you are taking to correct the issue.
- **Show Emotion:** When the situation calls for it, express compassion and concern.
- **Focus on What You Can Control:** In a crisis, there are a lot of moving parts you simply cannot control. Focus instead on those things you can control.
- **Look Ahead:** Anticipate what might happen down the road and be prepared for the aftershocks that may follow in the days, weeks and months after the initial event.
- **Communicate, Don't Hibernate:** Over-communicate with key audiences. In uncertain times, they want to hear from you. Reach out to them and reiterate your key messages.

## **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCE**

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