

Local County Health Department

Action Dates

Approval: _____

Revisions: _____

Effective: _____

Next Review: _____

Policy Title: Communicable Disease Risk Communication
No. [Example X.XXX-0X]

Purpose: This policy describes the local health department's plan for risk communication in outbreaks of communicable disease.

Policy: Risk communication is a component of every disease investigation. It is an important control measure in most high-profile cases and in outbreaks of communicable disease. The local health department will make training available to staff to function as part of statewide team of risk communicators. Local health department crisis communication plans will be consistent with state level preparedness plans developed by the NC Division of Public Health.

Approvals:

| | | |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|
| _____ | __/__/__ | Date Signed |
| Director of Nursing | | |
| _____ | __/__/__ | Date Signed |
| Medical Director | | |
| _____ | __/__/__ | Date Signed |
| Health Director | | |

Procedure:

1. LHD, or designee, will be the official spokesperson for the local health department in matters related to communicable disease cases and outbreak investigations.
2. Spokesperson will be knowledgeable of DHHS/DPH Crisis Communication plans.
3. Spokesperson will be a member of the EPI Team.
4. Spokesperson will be responsible for developing, distributing, and updating talking points daily during outbreaks or high profile cases. Talking points will address:
 - o What is happening
 - o Who is affected
 - o When, where and why it occurred
 - o What the health department is doing about the situation
 - o Who else is addressing the problem
 - o When additional information will be available
 - o What actions individuals can take to reduce their risk
 - o Who can be contacted for additional information or concerns
5. Develop press releases, letters and memos for release, using the talking points.
6. Serve as the only point of contact for requests from the media.
7. Assure public health information is disseminated to health care providers and community partners.
8. In widespread outbreaks or situations where joint operations are being conducted, the health department will coordinate release of information with other agencies.
9. Coordinate messages with law enforcement during bioterrorism events.
10. Maintain patient privacy in accordance with HIPAA and other applicable privacy statutes and rules.

Definitions:

High-Profile Case:

Historical Notes: [local use]

See also related policies: [local use – example Compensatory Time, Building Security, Communication, etc.]