

Focus Area 3 Worksheet: Communications

Focus Area 3: Communications

To help you understand what is included in this Focus Area, review the following goals and keys to success.

GOALS FOR COMMUNICATIONS:

Agency/jurisdiction lays groundwork for good communication with key persons both internal and external to the agency before an outbreak occurs.

KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR COMMUNICATIONS:

“Keys to success” are activities, relationships, and resources that are believed to be critical to achieving success in a Focus Area. Determining whether an agency/jurisdiction has a particular key to success in place is somewhat subjective. Metrics, such as measures of time (e.g., rapidly, timely, and quickly), have not been defined. Your Workgroup should provide its own definitions for these terms, as is appropriate for your agency/jurisdiction, and use its best judgment in deciding whether a particular key to success is fully or partially in place.

Contact lists

- Agency/jurisdiction identifies key persons and organizations related to outbreak response before an outbreak occurs including members of the outbreak response team, officials inside the agency, contacts at external agencies (i.e., other local, state, and federal agencies), and the media.
- Agency/jurisdiction establishes and frequently updates contact lists for key persons and organizations.

Communication practices

- Agency/jurisdiction has procedures for communicating with key persons and organizations. Procedures are written and easily accessible by staff.
- Agency/jurisdiction has staff trained in risk communications and communicating with the media..
- Agency/jurisdiction identifies a person(s) responsible for external communications on behalf of the agency/jurisdiction during each outbreak response.

Making changes

- Agency/jurisdiction conducts a debriefing among investigators following each outbreak response and refines outbreak response planning based on lessons learned.
- Agency/jurisdiction has performance indicators related to communications and routinely evaluates its performance in this Focus Area.

List the persons participating in the discussion of this Focus Area and list their affiliation.

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2. PRIORITIZE CIFOR RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS.

Having identified activities and procedures in need of improvement, review the CIFOR recommendations related to this Focus Area (listed below). Rate the priority for implementing each recommendation based on its likely impact on foodborne outbreak response at your agency/jurisdiction and available resources. Use a scale of 1 to 5 to rate each recommendation (1 = Low priority for implementation and 5 = High priority for implementation). If a recommendation is already in place in your agency/jurisdiction, check the appropriate box. If a recommendation is not relevant to your agency/jurisdiction, select N/A. **Refer to the blue underlined section number following each recommendation to view the recommendation as it appears in the CIFOR Guidelines.**

	Already in place	Priority for Implementation or Improvement					
		LOW			HIGH		
Contact lists							
Prepare contact information (including after-hours telephone numbers) for persons in the agency who should be contacted in the event of an outbreak, including backups. (3.6.2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Prepare contact information (including after-hours telephone numbers) for contact persons in external agencies (e.g., other local, state, and federal agencies). (3.6.2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Prepare contact information (including after-hours telephone numbers) for important food industry contacts, including trade associations. (3.6.2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Ensure that all contact lists are updated at least twice yearly and, when feasible, made available to all stakeholders in both electronic and hard copy formats. (3.6.2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Distribute a list of your agency's contacts to other agencies, and obtain a list of their contacts. (3.6.2.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Additional ideas:

Communication practices – Internal (outbreak response team and their organizational units and agencies)

Ensure that members of the outbreak response team know each other before an outbreak occurs. (3.6.2.2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Establish and use routine procedures for communicating among outbreak response team members and their units and agencies before an outbreak occurs. (3.6.2.2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Decide on the basis of roles who will be notified when an outbreak is suspected, including any changes in notification according to the nature of the outbreak (e.g., pathogen type, involvement of commercial product) and timing (weekends and holidays versus week days). (3.6.2.2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Already in place Priority for Implementation or Improvement

Communication practices – Internal (cont'd)

LOW HIGH

Determine whether and how confidential information (e.g., from forms and questionnaires) can be shared within the outbreak response team before an outbreak occurs. ([3.5.2](#)) ([3.6.2.2](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

During an outbreak response, maintain close communication and coordination among members of the outbreak response team. ([5.1.2.3](#)) ([5.2.5](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

During an outbreak response, identify persons who will be responsible for external communication on behalf of their organizational unit and for the outbreak response team. ([3.6.2.2](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

During an outbreak response, communicate actions taken and new outbreak information to all members in the outbreak response team. ([6.4.1](#)) ([5.2.5](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

During an outbreak response, arrange for the outbreak response team to meet daily to update the entire team in a timely manner. ([5.2.5](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Additional ideas:

Communication practices – External agencies (other local, state, and federal agencies)

Develop standardized processes (including notification triggers and timelines) for sharing information with other local, state, and federal agencies, including who will notify the next level of public health, environmental health, or food-regulatory agencies. ([3.6.2.3](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Establish routine communications with other agencies before an outbreak occurs. ([3.6.2](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Foster working relationships with other agencies, holding joint meetings and planning sessions before an outbreak occurs. ([3.6.2.3](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Establish processes for participating in multiagency, multijurisdictional conference calls and train staff in conference call etiquette. ([3.6.2.3](#)). 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Determine whether and how confidential information can be shared with other local, state and federal agencies. ([3.6.2.3](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Identify and regularly communicate with agencies or organizations that receive possible foodborne illness complaints (e.g., agriculture agencies, facility licensing agencies, poison control centers) and ensure they have current contact information for your staff. ([4.3.9.7](#)) ([4.3.9.12](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Rapidly post subtyping results to PulseNet and note the detection of clusters to PulseNet and Foodborne Outbreak listserves. ([4.2.10.5](#)) 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

	Already in place	Priority for Implementation or Improvement					
		LOW			HIGH		
Communication practices – External agencies (cont'd)							
Document every outbreak investigation by using a standardized form to facilitate inclusion in state and national outbreak databases. (5.2.9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Additional ideas:

Communication practices – Public

Establish standard channels of communication with the public before an outbreak occurs and use those same channels each time a public health concern arises about which the public might seek information. (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Periodically issue foodborne disease prevention messages or press releases to ensure the public knows with whom to communicate and from where information will come during an outbreak. (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Because the public obtains news from multiple sources, use all available sources to disseminate information to the public (e.g., the Internet, television, radio, and newspapers). (6.4.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create and test web-based tools for communication with the public (e.g., blast e-mails, survey instruments). (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create templates for communications with the public (e.g., fact sheets), focusing on the most common foodborne diseases before an outbreak occurs. (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Establish relationships with consumer groups that might be helpful in disseminating information about foodborne disease outbreaks and disease prevention messages. (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Adopt a standardized format for reporting risk information to the public. (6.4.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Adopt standardized scripts for reporting complex procedural or technical information to the public and recommending actions the public should take during an outbreak. (6.4.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Test messages to the public with representatives of the target population before releasing them. (6.4.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Guide staff on responses to and communication with upset members of the public. (3.6.2.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide copies of summary reports from each outbreak response to members of the public who request it. (5.2.10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Additional ideas:

Planning and Preparation

Focus Area 3: Communications

	Already in place	Priority for Implementation or Improvement					
		LOW			HIGH		
Communication practices – Media							
Obtain media training for primary agency spokespersons. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Identify an agency lead on media interactions, ideally someone trained as a public information officer. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Establish procedures for coordinating agency communications with the media. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Establish standard channels of communication with the media (e.g., website, telephone number), and use those same channels each time a public health concern occurs and which might require public information. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Identify primary contact persons from major local media outlets. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know routine deadlines and time frames for reporting news through major local media outlets (e.g., the deadline for having news from a press release appear in the evening newspaper). (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Periodically hold a media education event to teach new media professionals in the media market about public health and response to foodborne disease outbreaks. (3.6.2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Additional ideas:

Making changes

Conduct a debriefing following each outbreak response with all members of the outbreak response team to identify lessons learned. (6.6) (3.2.3) (5.2.8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Prepare summary reports for all outbreaks consistent with the size and complexity of the response. Use the reports as a continuous quality improvement opportunity. (3.7.2) (5.2.9) (6.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide summary reports available to all members of the outbreak response team and their units and agencies and persons responsible for implementing control measures. (5.2.10) (6.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Additional ideas:

3. MAKE PLANS TO IMPLEMENT SELECTED CIFOR RECOMMENDATIONS.

For each CIFOR recommendation selected in the previous step (or idea formulated by the Workgroup), identify who might take the lead in implementing the recommendation and the timeframe for implementation (e.g., a specific completion date or whether the change is likely to require short-, mid- or long-term efforts). If certain actions must precede others, make a note of this and adjust the timeframe. In addition, consider factors that might positively or negatively influence implementation of the recommendation and ways to incorporate the recommendation into your agency's/jurisdiction's standard operating procedures.

CIFOR recommendations or other ideas from previous step	Lead person	Timeframe for implementation	Notes (e.g., necessary antecedents, factors that might influence implementation, ways to incorporate the recommendation into standard operating procedures)

Date worksheet completed _____