



10 Strategies for Communicating With Staff During a Crisis



Clear and consistent communication during a crisis is just as important as planning before a disaster strikes. Staff are a critical factor in how fast and how well a hospital can handle a crisis. Hospital leaders are encouraged to use these strategies to ensure your staff are in the know and feel supported as they respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.



1. OVERCOMMUNICATE

- Use key talking points to ensure the message is consistent and repeat the message.
- Don't expect employees to come to you. Implement a notification system that quickly reaches out to employees with accurate information and guidance.
- State the obvious. Reassure staff their health and safety are your top priority



2. COMMIT TO AND DEMONSTRATE TRANSPARENCY

- Open communication about supply shortages and other challenges is better than playing the "guessing game."
- Let staff know what you are doing, what requests are being made to keep them safe and healthy.
- Engage with "negative leaders" before they engage with you. Ask them to be involved and get their input.



3. ACT FAST AND BE ACCURATE

- Speed is of the essence when it comes to crisis communications, but it shouldn't come at the price of accuracy.



4. DON'T GO SILENT

- If your organization is not yet ready to respond to an emergency, human resources should at least let staff know that the organization is gathering information and will follow up as soon as it can.



5. LEADER ROUNDING (ALL AREAS AND SHIFTS)

- Frontline staff need to see their leaders, be able to discuss their concerns and know they're being heard. Managers and directors need the same support.
- Model rounding and require the same from managers and directors.
- Use human resources and pastoral care as part of rounding team.



6. REVIEW AND RESPOND TO ALL CONCERNS, NO MATTER THE SIZE

- Unresponsiveness quickly erodes trust and will make staff feel unsupported.
- Investigate and address situations of rule breaking, no matter who it is.
- Listen to staff and offer chaplain hours, open door hours for administrative staff on call.



7. KEEP MANAGERS AND DIRECTORS IN THE LOOP

- Nothing destroys a good message faster than a conflicting message.



8. USE EXISTING FRONTLINE LEADERS TO HELP STRUCTURE AND DELIVER MESSAGES

- Formal leaders can include those from a shared governance structure.
- Informal leaders are those who staff tend to "hear."

9. INCLUDE STAFF MORALE & CONCERNS AS PART OF DAILY LEADERSHIP HUDDLE

- Identify any "annoyance factors" that can be eliminated quickly for staff. Get that done and communicated.

10. TEST, THEN TEST AGAIN

- The most well-crafted communication plan isn't effective if employees have no idea what it is or how to use it. Check with staff to see what is and isn't working, and then adjust accordingly