

Crisis Communication Tips

When a syphilis outbreak takes place in your community, most often your state or local health department will execute a communication plan to inform key segments of the community about the issue. But as an organization supporting the Syphilis Elimination Effort (SEE), what should you do or how can you be involved?

Should a syphilis outbreak occur in your community, you want to be prepared to communicate important testing, treatment, and other outbreak information quickly and accurately with your key stakeholders (i.e. health care providers, policy makers, community based organizations, the general community, and the media). Here are some suggestions for responding to a syphilis outbreak in your community.

1. Contact Your Local Health Department
 - Determine the health department's communication activities, as well as the testing and treatment services they are offering the community. You want to make sure that your efforts are coordinated with the health department.
2. Identify and Define Your Audiences
 - Who will be affected by a syphilis outbreak? Will it be members of your organization, a neighborhood within your city or town, or patients attending your clinic?
 - How can you best communicate with them?
 - If you are part of a SEE community coalition, talk with your coalition members to determine how the coalition members can best reach their target audiences.
3. Develop Uniform Messages for Your Stakeholders
 - During a crisis, a flurry of misinformation is bound to circulate due to an increased level of public anxiety and fear. Identify the key messages you need to communicate to your target audiences. Use statistics and key messages provided by your health department.
4. Communicate Both "Inside" and "Outside"
 - Whether you are responsible for informing senior managers and staff at your organization, members of your SEE community coalition, or other partners, set up an easy, efficient, and direct communication system that will keep all those who need to be informed apprised of the latest outbreak developments and your activities.