Communicating in an Emergency: When One Size Doesn’t Fit All
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Summary of Topic:
Communication efforts don’t have to start from scratch during every emergency response, even in unique situations. Awardees will learn important risk communication principles, obtain adaptable communication templates, and hear real-life examples about how to communicate in an infectious disease emergency to special populations when one size doesn’t fit all.

Description of Session:
Emergency Risk Communication: A Lifesaving Tactic

“The right message at the right time from the right person can save lives.” This core principle of crisis and emergency risk communication reminds us that proper communication in an emergency can be the difference between public health success and failure, and sometimes between life and death. In this presentation, we’ll discuss how communicating in a crisis is different and what attendees can do to support responders on the front line. We’ll also discuss why empathy is a critical component of emergency communication, not just to be politically correct, but for scientific reasons.

Sarah Poser, health communication specialist, Division of Viral Diseases, CDC

Communication Toolkits for Disease Outbreak Investigations and Response

State and local health departments lead outbreak investigations and responses, for which effective communication is essential. In this session, we’ll present communication toolkits that CDC’s Division of Viral Diseases created, which include materials for health departments to use or adapt to effectively reach healthcare professionals, the public, news media, and other groups during outbreak investigations and responses. We’ll show examples of materials, such as websites, factsheets, and graphics, which CDC and health departments created for previous outbreaks that can be readily used or adapted. We’ll also show you our guide so you can create toolkits to meet your needs.

Amie Nisler, MPH, health communication specialist, Northrop Grumman

Serogroup B Meningococcal Disease Outbreak on a Wisconsin University Campus, and the Mass Vaccine Campaign Response

A serogroup B meningitis outbreak in October 2016 sent shockwaves through the University of Wisconsin—Madison campus when three cases were identified. To help protect additional students from getting sick, the University of Wisconsin conducted a communication campaign, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Immunization Program, to normalize and promote meningitis vaccine among the student population. They ultimately administered nearly 21,000 vaccine doses as part of the response and worked to promote personal hygiene messages which are often unpopular in this age group. This session will discuss communication, clinic logistics, partnerships, and lessons learned. And we’ll reveal how they balanced strong health prevention messages with college fun to ensure the campaign succeeded.
Stephanie Schauer, Ph.D., immunization program manager, Wisconsin Division of Public Health

Mumps Outbreak at Syracuse University, New York State: Communicating with Students

In the past two years, New York State has seen a significant increase in mumps cases, primarily linked to outbreaks in university settings. During fall 2017 semester, more than 140 Syracuse University students developed mumps during an outbreak that began on a sports team. Most students had received the recommended doses of mumps-containing vaccine. Effectively engaging and communicating key risk-reduction messages to a student population is challenging. In this session, we’ll discuss how Syracuse University, with guidance from the New York State Department of Health, developed a coordinated communication plan for the campus community. A highlight of the plan was a unique, student-led outreach effort called “Bump the Mumps.”

Christine Compton, M.D., M.P.H., medical director, Bureau of Immunization, New York State Department of Health