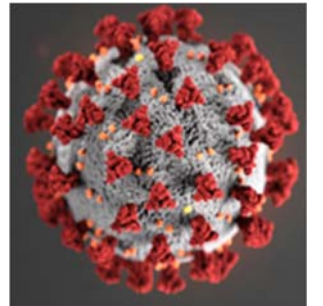




CERC Overview for COVID-19

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April 6, 2020



Novel Coronavirus Information

- See CDC website:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
 - Suggestions from this presentation apply to multiple types of public health concerns, including infectious disease outbreaks.

Introduction to Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC)

Purpose

CERC principles can help you provide the public with information to make the **best decisions** within incredibly **challenging time constraints** and to accept the **imperfect nature of choice**.

The **right message** at the **right time** from the **right person** can save lives.

Six Core Principles of CERC



Six Principles of CERC

Fully integrated CERC helps ensure that limited resources are managed well and can do the most good at every phase of an emergency.

1



Be First:

Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information often becomes the preferred source.

2



Be Right:

Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.

3



Be Credible:

Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during crises.

4



Express Empathy:

Crises create harm, and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling, and the challenges they face, builds trust and rapport.

5



Promote Action:

Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.³

6



Show Respect:

Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.

Six Principles of CERC:

#1 - Be First

- If your organization has information, and it is your responsibility to provide it, do so as soon as possible.
- If you can't provide information, explain how you are working to get it.

Six Principles of CERC:

#2 – Be Right

- Promote credibility through accuracy.
- Give facts in brief messages. Stick to the main points.
- Tell people what you know, when you know it.
- Tell them what information is not available yet, and tell them what is being done to get the additional information.

Six Principles of CERC:

#3 – Be Credible

- Honesty should not be compromised.
- Uncertainty is worse than not knowing.
- Rumors are more damaging than hard truths.



Six Principles of CERC:

#4 – Express Empathy

- Acknowledge feelings in words.
- Empathy can build trust.

Being quarantined can be disruptive, frustrating, and feel scary. Especially when the reason for quarantine is exposure to a new disease for which there may be limited information.

- Dr. Nancy Messonnier, CDC telebriefing February 14, 2020

Six Principles of CERC:

#5 – Promote Action

- Taking action calms anxiety and can help restore a sense of control.
- In an infectious disease outbreak, public understanding of and action on disease prevention is key to stopping the spread.

Keep action messages simple, short, and easy to remember, like “cover your cough.”

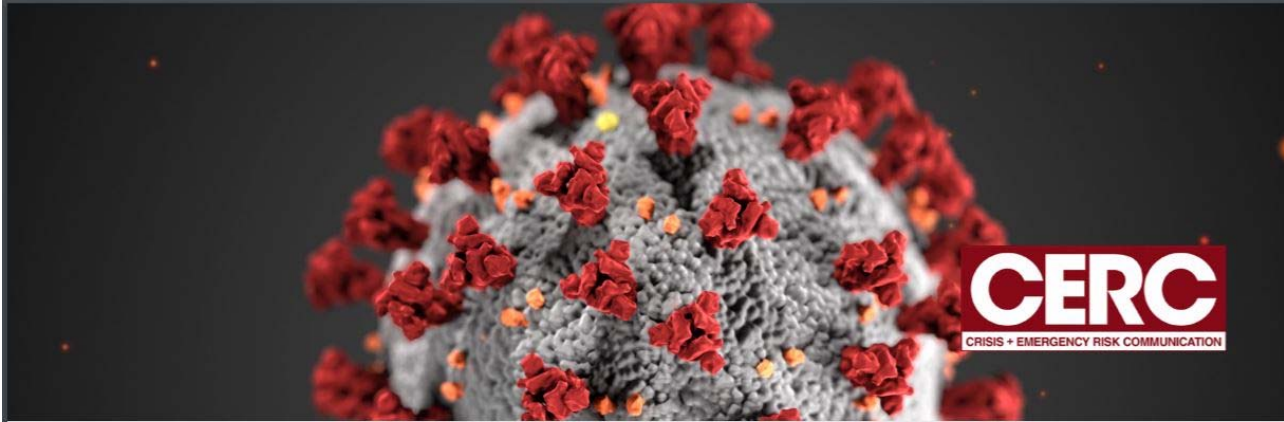
Six Principles of CERC:

#6 – Show Respect

- Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.
- Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable.

Always treat people the way you want to be treated – the way you want your loved ones to be treated – even when hard decisions must be communicated.

CERC in an Infectious Disease Outbreak Fact Sheet



CERC
CRISIS + EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION

CERC in an Infectious Disease Outbreak

- Be First:** Quickly sharing information about a disease outbreak can help stop the spread of disease, and prevent and reduce illness and even death. People often remember the first information they hear in an emergency, so the first information they receive should come from health experts.
 - Even if the cause of the outbreak or specific disease is unknown, share facts that are available. This can help you stay ahead of possible rumors.
 - Share information about the signs and symptoms of disease, who is at risk, treatment and care options, and when to seek medical care.
- Be Right:** Accuracy establishes credibility.
- Express Empathy:** Disease outbreaks can cause fear and disrupt daily lives. Lesser-known or emerging diseases cause more uncertainty and anxiety. Acknowledging what people are feeling and their challenges shows that you are considering their perspectives when you give recommendations.
 - For example, during a telebriefing for the coronavirus disease 2019 response: *“Being quarantined can be disruptive, frustrating, and feel scary. Especially when the reason for quarantine is exposure to a new disease for which there may be limited information.”*
- Promote Action:** In an infectious disease outbreak,

The CERC Rhythm

Engage Community • Empower Decision-Making • Evaluate

Preparation

- Draft and test messages
- Develop partnerships
- Create plans
- Determine approval process

Initial

- Express empathy
- Explain risks
- Promote action
- Describe response efforts

Maintenance

- Explain ongoing risks
- Segment audiences
- Provide background information
- Address rumors

Resolution

- Motivate vigilance
- Discuss lessons learned
- Revise plan

Psychology of a Crisis



What do people feel during a disaster?

- Psychological barriers:
 - Denial
 - Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
 - Hopelessness or helplessness

People seldom panic.



Processing Information in a Crisis

People tend to...	So you should...
Simplify messages	Use simple messages
Hold on to current beliefs	Use credible sources
Look for additional information and opinions	Use consistent messages
Believe the first message	Release accurate messages as soon as possible

How do we communicate about risk during an emergency?

All risks are not accepted equally

- Voluntary vs. involuntary
- Controlled personally vs. controlled by others
- Familiar vs. exotic
- Natural vs. manmade
- Reversible vs. permanent
- Statistical vs. anecdotal
- Fairly vs. unfairly distributed
- Affecting adults vs. affecting children

Countering Psychological Barriers

- Acknowledge fear and uncertainty.
- Express wishes. (“I wish I had answers.”)
- Don’t over-reassure.
- Explain the process in place to find answers.
- Promote action. Ask more of people.
- When the news is good, state continued concern before stating reassuring updates.

Develop and Tailor Messages



Use Plain Language

- Be brief.
- Give positive action steps.
- Use words your audience uses.
- Use personal pronouns.

Visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for more guidance

- [Health Literacy](#)
- [CDC Clear Communication Index](#)



Tailor Messages

- Identify your audiences and groups within those audiences.
- Continue to base your message on key messages.
- Consider the role of culture in tailoring and sharing your message.

 **CDC en Español** @CDCespanol · Mar 19

Entre todos podemos reducir y desacelerar la transmisión del #COVID19. El distanciamiento social es una forma de hacerlo: evitar lugares con mucha gente y mantener distancia con los demás cuando posible. Más consejos: bit.ly/2U1fJC6




**ENFERMEDAD DEL CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19)**

Distanciamiento social significa mantener la distancia entre usted y los demás.

cdc.gov/COVID19-es

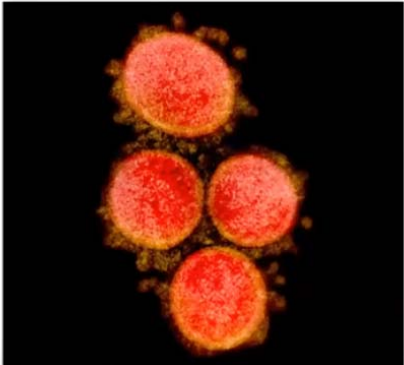
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 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update and Information for Long-term Care Facilities Copy link

COVID-19 Clinical Information for Long-Term Care

- Brief update on COVID-19 (more at www.cdc.gov/covid19)
- Overview of COVID-19 clinical presentation and course
- Mortality and risk factors
- Special considerations for long-term care
- Management and treatment



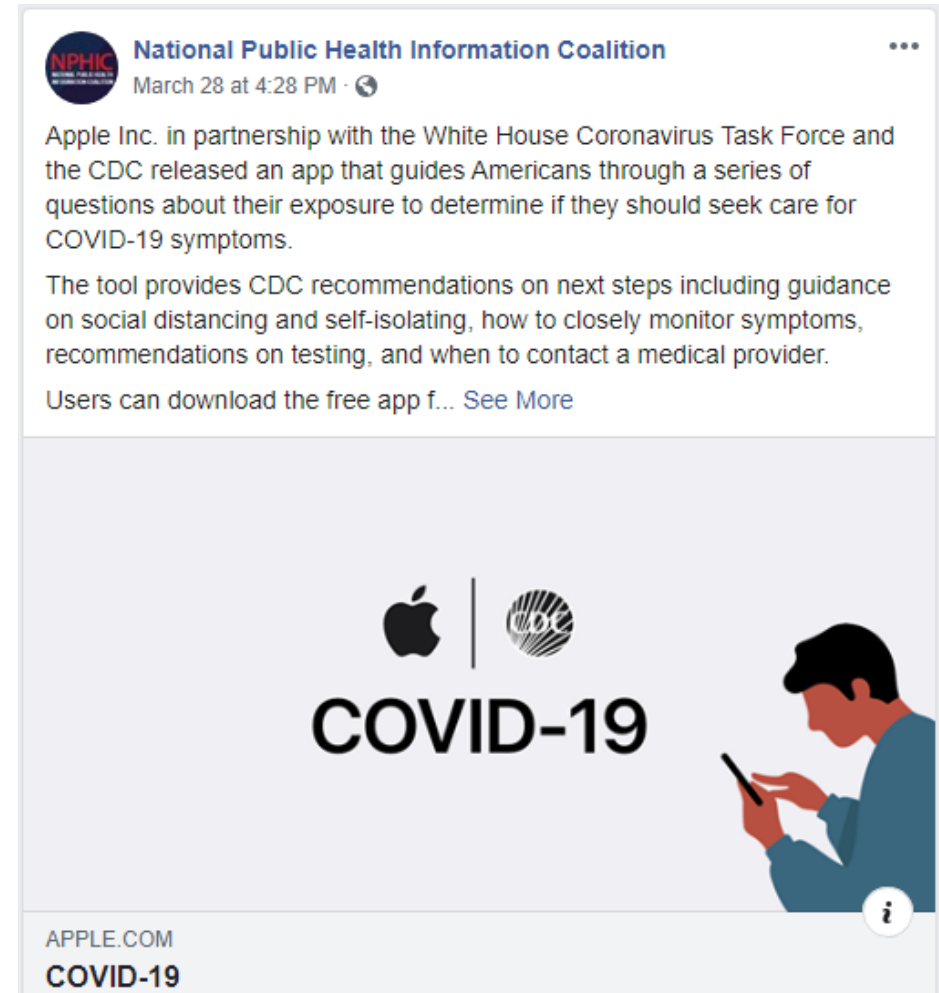
Novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
by NIAID-RML

MORE VIDEOS

12:44 / 59:12

Work with Others to Share Messages

- When possible, establish relationships before the emergency.
- Seek and accept input from partners.





The image shows a Facebook post from the National Public Health Information Coalition. The post is dated March 28 at 4:28 PM. The text of the post describes a new app released in partnership with Apple Inc., the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and the CDC. The app is designed to help Americans determine if they should seek care for COVID-19 symptoms by asking a series of questions about their exposure. It also provides CDC recommendations on next steps, including guidance on social distancing, self-isolating, monitoring symptoms, testing, and when to contact a medical provider. The post includes a link to 'See More' and a small image of a person using a smartphone. The image also features the logos of Apple and the CDC, and the text 'COVID-19' and 'APPLE.COM COVID-19'.

NPHIC National Public Health Information Coalition
March 28 at 4:28 PM · 🌐

Apple Inc. in partnership with the White House Coronavirus Task Force and the CDC released an app that guides Americans through a series of questions about their exposure to determine if they should seek care for COVID-19 symptoms.

The tool provides CDC recommendations on next steps including guidance on social distancing and self-isolating, how to closely monitor symptoms, recommendations on testing, and when to contact a medical provider.

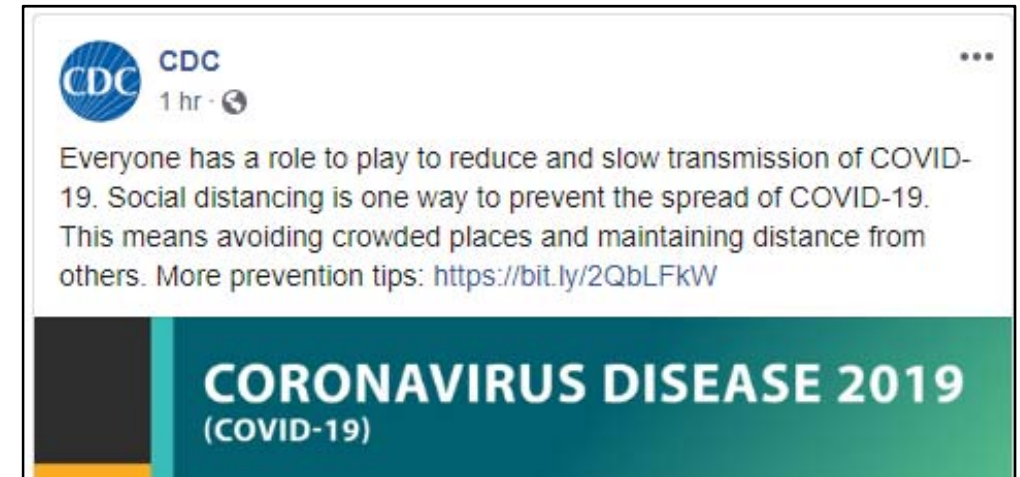
Users can download the free app f... [See More](#)

 | 
COVID-19

APPLE.COM
COVID-19

Promote Repetition and Consistent Messaging

- Share the same message across multiple platforms.
- Coordinate messaging with response partners.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Everyone can do their part to help respond to this emerging public health threat:
 - On March 16, the White House announced a program called [15 Days to Slow the Spread](#) which is a nationwide effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 through the implementation of social distancing at all levels of society.

More Effective Practices for Improving Communication

More Effective Practices

- Choose an effective spokesperson.
- Facilitate positive relationships with media.
- Listen and evaluate.
- Avoid common mistakes.

Tips for Spokespersons

- Avoid humor, speculation, and condescension.
- Refute negative allegations without repeating them.
- Use plain language.
- Stick to the main points.
- Remember that what you say is never “off the record.”

Positive Relationships with Media

- Establish relationships early.
- Provide the same information to all outlets.
- Provide options.
- Give a time frame.
- Make accommodations.

Listen and Evaluate

- Monitor media and social media.
- Ask for feedback.
- Use rapid message testing.
- Analyze available data (website metrics, public hotline information, etc.).

Five Communication Mistakes to Avoid

1. Mixed messages from multiple experts
2. Information released late
3. Paternalistic attitudes
4. Not countering rumors and myths in real-time
5. Public power struggles and confusion





Resources

- CERC Website
 - emergency.cdc.gov/cerc
- Additional Inquiries
 - cercrequest@cdc.gov

Continuing Education

Please use the Course Access Code **CERC0406** to receive continuing education. <https://tceols.cdc.gov/Home/Steps>

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 www.cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

