



Developing an Emergency Communication Plan for an Institution of Higher Education: Interactive Exercise Worksheet



Activity Overview

In this activity, you will:

1. Verify the situation
2. Assemble the crisis communication team
3. Assess the situation
4. Establish media center
5. Communicate with key audiences
6. Monitor, maintain and make adjustments for the remaining time of crisis



The Scenario

A student has reported to a student life staff member that they are feeling sick after eating in the Student Union Cafeteria last night. They tell her that their symptoms include:

- Low-Grade Fever
- Nausea & Vomiting
- Abdominal Cramping
- Watery Diarrhea
- General Weakness

Additional Information:

- The student has been sent to the health center.
- The student is slightly dehydrated.
- The student lived on campus.
- Other calls are coming in with reports of students presenting with nausea & vomiting after eating in common areas, dining halls, and doing homework in the study halls.
- What are the suspected cause(s) of the illness? _____



Step 1: Verify the Situation

How are you going to do this? _____



Step 2: Identify Key Stakeholders

Who are your key stakeholders/audiences? _____



Universal Precautions

- Implement a campus-wide hand washing protocol.
- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizers (≥62% ethanol) may be helpful as an adjunct method of hand hygiene, but should not replace washing with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect all common (congregating) areas (dining tables, bathrooms, kitchens, study areas, etc.)
- If you are sick, stay home.



Scenario Update

- Within 6 hours 200 students are exhibiting symptoms of gastro-intestinal discomfort.
- The students, faculty, staff, parents, and community are concerned and want information.
- The local press is seeking information via email, telephone, and personal visits to campus.
- Tell people you are investigating and do not assume any unconfirmed speculations.
- What are your priorities in managing this crisis? _____
- What do you suspect the illness is? _____
- Are there any mandated actions you must take? _____
- If so, then what are they? _____
- Page 98, Chapter 6 of HEOA Handbook:
- Norovirus is considered under Clery and HEOA to be, upon confirmation, to be a “significant emergency” or “dangerous situation” involving an immediate threat to the health and safety of students or employees on campus.
- You must warn your campus community under the “Emergency Notification and Timely Warnings” element of Clery/HEOA.



Step 3: Situational Assessment

Who at the school should be responsible for communicating with the public? _____

What information does each stakeholder group need to know? _____

What will be the main objectives of your communications? _____

What are your challenges? _____



Step 4: Establish Media Center

Would you set up a media staging area? If so, where? _____

How will you communicate the message and the facts? _____

How will you control the message? _____

How will you control the flow of information? _____

What could the communications center do to help you with your job? _____

Is there a JIC/JIS established for the community? _____



Step 5: Communicate with Key Audiences/Stakeholders

Who are your key audiences? _____

What are your key messages at various stages of the emergency? _____

Identify available mediums and determine which ones to use to communicate the message.

How will you communicate the message and the facts? _____

How will you activate crisis website, social media and crisis hotline? _____

What type of guidance will you provide to the public? _____

How will you control the message? _____

How will you control the flow of information? _____



Step 6: Monitor, Maintain and Make Adjustments for the Life of the Crisis

How will you monitor, maintain and make adjustments for the remaining life of the crisis? _____
