

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

LEADER'S PLAYBOOK



U.S. AIR FORCE

Effective leader communication can reduce emotional distress and increase efficacy of public health prevention measures and treatment.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

People want to know the full truth, even if it may be difficult to hear. Make the greatest possible disclosure of facts your default setting.

Start with compassion, then conviction, end with optimism (CCO)

- Express compassion "We appreciate all you're doing in these difficult times"
- Confirm facts/action steps "We have a member who has been confirmed positive for COVID-19. We are taking the following steps: treating the ill member, isolating people who have been in close contact and sanitizing the work environment"
- Also state what you don't know; "We don't know how long ____ will be quarantined or close contacts isolated"
- Explain process for further action "If you believe you've been exposed or have concerns, call the Nurse Advice Line, or visit [Tricare.mil](https://www.tricare.mil) or the CDC website's self-check"
- State your commitment "We will remain vigilant, monitor for anyone becoming ill, and assist the families. We will provide information as it becomes available"
- Vector people toward trusted resources "Please visit the CDC website and [Tricare.mil](https://www.tricare.mil)"

AVOID:

- False reassurances/promises
- Minimizing/dismissing concerns
- Waiting until guidance is 100%
- Letting rumors/myths go un-counteracted
- Using trite clichés "Don't worry" ; "There are no guarantees in life"
- Be careful with uses of humor, know your audience

KEEP IN MIND

- Expect to repeat message, across various forums
- Keep message clear, succinct
- Cut to the chase, avoid jargon
- Frightened people crave information and will miss nuances, so be simple & foot-stomp
- Small unintended inconsistencies in leadership messaging can upset an anxious public
- Don't delay bad news as holding back can project secret-keeping/guilt/arrogance
- Use phrases "We are committed to doing the best we can with the resources available to us", "I wish we knew more", "I don't know, we're working on it"
- Education on preparing home and work centers enhances self-efficacy
- Specifics of what to do and not to do gives people more sense of control