

# Module 4 - Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

## Objectives

- Describe crisis and emergency risk communication
- Define the role of the public information officer

## Overview

The CDC defines crisis and risk communication as...

"... the attempt by science or public health professionals to provide information that allows an individual, stakeholders, or an entire community to make the best possible decisions during a crisis emergency about their well being. Often this communication must be done within nearly impossible time constraints and requires public acceptance of the imperfect nature of the available choices for action."

*Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Course.*



## Pre-event Communication Planning

Planning before an emergency occurs will help ensure the ability to communicate effectively during a crisis. As part of the response, a Public Information Officer (PIO) will be identified who will serve as a spokesperson for the event. The spokesperson's role will be to develop and release information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

## Communications: Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

The PIO is the *only person who should talk directly to the media*. If you are approached by a member of the press or media, refer them to the PIO. The PIO will be a skilled communicator who is trained to deal with the media; this individual must convey credibility and trust while communicating vital information about the crisis at hand.

As a volunteer, you will be in a unique position to hear rumors or misinformation that may be circulating. If you do hear misinformation developing, you should inform the PIO so that the message can be corrected to the public.

In an emergency you will play a critical role communicating risk to your patients and their families. It's important for you to communicate information in a clear, concise,

and credible manner. Your ability to express empathy is extremely important. *People need to know that you care before they care what you know.*

As always, respect patient confidentiality. Private medical information must remain private. Refer to the MA Responds Privacy Policy and the HIPAA Act for more information.



### Summary

- The CDC defines crisis and risk communication as...  
“... the attempt by science or public health professionals to provide information that allows an individual, stakeholders, or an entire community to make the best possible decisions during a crisis emergency about their well-being. Often this communication must be done within nearly impossible time constraints and requires public acceptance of the imperfect nature of the available choices for action.”
- Planning before an emergency occurs will help ensure the ability to communicate effectively during a crisis. As part of the response, a Public Information Officer (PIO) will be identified who will serve as a spokesperson for the event.

## Test Your Knowledge

4.1	<b>A function of the MA Responds system is to provide information that allows an individual, stakeholders, or an entire community to make the best possible decisions during a crisis emergency about their well-being.</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. True <input type="checkbox"/> 2. False
4.2	<b>As a volunteer, what should you do if you are approached by the press or media personnel?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Respond in a clear and credible manner in plain English <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Correct misinformation or rumors that you have heard <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Refer the press or media to the Public Information Officer <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Explain about the role you play on the team and your duties <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Provide your email to ensure that quotes are correct.

## **Correct Answers**

4.1: 1

4.2: 3