

# **CRISIS + EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION (CERC) IN RESPONSE TO AN**

# OPIOID OVERDOSE EVENT

# ② 1. Be First

Surveillance informs public health officials early when opioid overdoses are increasing and helps determine priority messages, target audiences, and best ways to get messages out in a timely manner.

- Share messages on the signs of an overdose and life-saving actions.
- Include local information on emergency contacts and naloxone availability and administration.
- Engage at-risk populations through targeted messaging.

# 2. Be Right

The right **community response** and messaging varies in every opioid overdose event. "Know your epidemic, know your response," reminds us to respond according to who is being affected and how.

- Include the public in message development.
- Meet with at-risk populations and stakeholders to learn about their perspectives, barriers to care, and realistic actions they will take.

## 3. Be Credible

Opioid responses require several partners to work together (such as law enforcement, public health, and hospital systems). Make sure the public is hearing information from the appropriate experts.

- Differences in messaging can lead to confusion and distrust. Ensure all responding agencies are providing the same information and same instructions to the public.
- Consider choosing a spokesperson from your community to help relate with target populations— for example, someone in recovery from opioid use disorder (addiction) or who has experienced an overdose.

#### **CERC'S SIX PRINCIPLES**

#### 1. Be First.

The first source of information often becomes the preferred source. Communicating information quickly is crucial.

#### 2. Be Right.

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

#### 3. Be Credible.

Honesty and truthfulness cannot be compromised in a crisis.

#### 4. Express Empathy.

Acknowledge what people are feeling in words to build trust and rapport.

#### 5. Promote Action.

Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety and promotes a sense of control.

### 6. Show Respect.

Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable.





# 4. Express Empathy

Demonstrate understanding of the personal challenges of overdose and addiction to help open the door to collaboration with those at risk and affected.

- · Listen first to understand the needs and concerns of the affected community.
- Acknowledge that seeing or experiencing an overdose is frightening.
- Acknowledge the courage it takes to come forward for help and that recovery can be a long and difficult process.





### 5. Promote Action

Public health responses start in the community. Give people actions they can take to prevent opioid overdoses. Action messages can include:

- Learn the signs of overdose and how to respond.
- If you are prescribed opioids, only take medication as directed by your doctor and dispose of unused medication properly.
- Share information about opioid overdose prevention with neighbors, family, and community.

# 6. Show Respect

Like any crisis, people affected by opioid addiction and overdose deserve healthy lives. Opioid misuse is complex, and addiction is not a moral failing.

- Combat stigma associated with drug overdose and addiction through public education and people-first messaging (for example, use "person with an opioid use disorder" instead of "addict").
- Do not dismiss peoples' concerns. Give people a chance to talk and ask questions.
- Know the facts and sensitivities around opioid use and misuse. Never assume to know the path that leads to an overdose; it is different for every individual.