

Communicating During the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious makes the following recommendations to leaders:

Include Your Communicator on Your Emergency Preparedness Team

Many communities are holding regular meetings with a team that includes the leadership, nursing staff, operations, human resources, food services, wellness team who care for the motherhouse sisters, **and communications**. If the communicator is at the table, the person has access to all information and can help determine what is relevant and helpful when crafting internal and external messages including to: sisters, staff, associates, sponsored ministries, the public, donors, the media, etc.

Remember that Communicators Offer A Needed Perspective

Communicators process what they hear through the filters of: Who needs to know? What do they need to know? When do they need to know? How do we get the information to them? Communicators think in terms of possibility, potential, and preparedness. They are trained to prepare for the worst; hope for the best.

Meet Regularly with Your Communicator

Throughout this crisis, leaders should make sure the communicator is in the loop. The communicator has a relationship with the media so reporters will call the communicator first. Communicators should not be in the dark when a reporter calls. Also, as time goes on, the media may look for different angles to the story and may reach out to find out how different segments of society are coping.

Work with Your Communicator on an Ongoing Communications Plan

The communicator can be working with you to develop a plan for best communicating with all your audiences for the situation as it is and, more importantly, in the event that the situation escalates and the virus impacts your congregation directly. If isolation and quarantine occur, congregations must be prepared to communicate to key audiences and, possibly, the media.

Encourage Your Communicator to Use Technology/Tools to Deliver Information Efficiently and Creatively

Communicators know how to keep your various audiences connected and engaged with you and one another via tools such as Facebook, Zoom, and your website. This is clearly a time when we will be increasingly relying on digital communicating to bridge the “social distancing.” With the communicator, you can look for ways to infuse your mission and charism into the world. Women religious have something that the world needs of us right now. We must not make it hard for people to find us.

