MARYLAND SCHOOL CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLANNING

PI: Brooke Fisher Liu, PhD
Co-PI: Holly Ann Roberts; Cheryl Duncan De Pinto, MD, MPH
Speaker: Tyler G. Page, M.A.
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OVERVIEW

- Literature review
- Plan analysis
- Content analysis of social media
- Survey of school leaders
CRISIS

- Crisis vs. disaster
- Crisis (Heath, 2010; Heath & Millar, 2004)
- Organization based
  - Locus of control
  - Accountability
Disaster

Community based

“Serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources”

-National Science and Technology Council, 2005
• An emergency website linked to district homepage
• An email listserv for stakeholders
• Email from school / district officials
• Daily fact sheet
• Letters or emails to parents at affected schools
• FAQs
• Email to journalists encouraging responsible coverage
• Draft messages to record on voice messaging systems
• Call logs to track media
RESOURCES

Make sure your organization is safe and ready

Become a Ready Rating Member to see how you compare and where you can improve.

New to Ready Rating? Check out the videos below for more enhanced program information.

Readyrating.org
COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

- Plans for translation services
- Media expert to prepare interviews
- Policies about media presence on school grounds
- Develop media partnerships to distribute information
• Plans for managing coverage after fact (benchmark dates)
• Outline notification procedures for parents (include who makes calls)
• Make plans for information hotlines
• Plan for prioritizing stakeholders
• Develop policies for planning memorial events
Media coverage

- Media is earliest tool to distribute information
- Duration can last a long time after event
  - Media covered Columbine for more than 30 days
- Schools have FERPA and other privacy obligations
STUDY METHOD

- Examined 33 crisis plan documents from state and 21 systems in Maryland
  - Maryland Department of Education website
  - Local school system websites
  - Collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education to outreach for others

- Analyzed on seven features:
  - Background
  - General messaging
  - Parent communication
  - Media relations
  - Evaluation
  - Training & planning
  - Miscellaneous
KEY FINDINGS

- Key findings:
- Background
  - Specific guidance for:
    - 9.5% - Active shooter
    - 28.6% - Bombing
    - 14.3% - Weather
    - 61.9% - Infectious disease
  - 19% - List key publics to target with messages
- General Communication
  - 19% - Email listserv for key stakeholders
  - 23.8% - Sending emergency alerts / texts to parents
  - 14.3% - Social media prep
  - 9.5% - Key messages developed
STUDY FINDINGS 2

- Parents
  - 9.5% - Templates for letters to parents
  - 52.4% - Notification procedures
  - 19% - Reunification points

- Media Relations
  - 0% - Media contact list
  - 4.8% - Templates for media updates
  - 9.5% - Call logs to track media
  - 19% - Spokesperson identified
  - 4.8% - Educate people about legal rights
STUDY FINDINGS 3

- Evaluation
  - 0% - Forms & templates

- Training & Planning
  - 23.8% - Explains who will activate plan
  - 14.3% - Parents, teachers, & nurses involved in planning

- Miscellaneous
  - 4.8% - How to manage volunteers
  - 3.8% - Plan to deploy counselors
• US Department of Education suggestions:
• Communicate during full-scale exercises
• Provide notification for school closures
• Post and receive status information
• Disseminate safety information, news alerts, and health alerts
• Post reunification protocols
• Add redundancy
• Direct & timely information dissemination
• Eliminate media gatekeeping
• Share crisis counseling information
• Share information about how community can help
• Temporary relocation information
• Re-opening procedures
• Thank volunteers
OTHER TOPICS

- Prepare for volunteer management
- Redundancy and preparation for communication
- Children with special needs
- Non-English speaking parents
Social Media Analysis

Method:
- Content analysis of social media posts
- All school system-level posts in MD:
  - October 2014 – September 2015
  - 611 social media posts (498 tweets, 102 FB, 11 Instagram)
- 22 out of 24 school systems represented
ASPECTS ANALYZED

• Re-opening procedures
• More information
• Calls to action
• Source
• Link to photo
• Color or number code
• Message type

• Actual disaster
• Type of disaster
• Closures, delays, etc.
• Posting or receiving during crisis
• Communication with parents
### Social Media Results

- What was reported...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delays</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Closures</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancellations</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Declared</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>611</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>611</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MINIMAL INCLUSION

- 0.3% - Pictures
- 0.3% - Videos
- 3.8% - Hashtags
- 0.7% - Full scale exercise
- 0.3% - Thanking volunteers
- 0.3% - Communicating to broader community
- 0% - Reunification protocols & counseling information
COLOR CODES

- Color codes used to label crisis (e.g., code red, code blue)
- 12 counties used color codes in social media posts (12.1% of all posts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th># of Messages</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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READABILITY

• Tested all social media posts for reading level required to comprehend them according to Flesch-Kincaid Readability Tests

• Posts clustered into 2 groups:
  • 10th Grade
  • 4th Grade

• These grade levels did NOT correspond to reading skill in counties.
  • 30.3% of all posts too high reading level (10th grade)

• Be sure to communicate at appropriate reading level for your county
• Tailor reading level of writing to your community.

• Communicate about more than weather
  • Drills
  • Other preparation meetings

• Incorporate pictures, videos, & hashtags

• Communicate with the community
  • Thanking volunteers
  • General information
INTERVIEWS + SURVEY

• Critical survey on school crisis preparation, plans, & communication
  • Participants get free guide to best crisis resources on planet
  • 25-30 minutes (can save & return)

• Making recommendations to state on how to improve crisis preparation in schools

• Handing out cards with survey link. Please share!
• What communication plans exist for during a crisis?
  • Parents (English & non-English speaking)
  • Media
  • Special needs children

• What training have you received in preparation for a crisis?
  • Were you involved in developing plans?
  • How were plans communicated to you?

• Your crisis experiences
The end!

- Email tpage@umd.edu with any questions...
• Please use this link to take our survey

https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/SE/?SID=SV_0ChzDsEWI910PM9