

36TH ANNUAL **AHA RURAL** | LEADERSHIP
HEALTH CARE | CONFERENCE

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JW MARRIOTT SAN ANTONIO HILL COUNTRY

Establishing Trust: Strategies for Rural Healthcare Communications During Crisis

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About Phelps Health

- Serves over 200,000 residents in south-central Missouri, is county-owned, non-tax supported and overseen by a five-member elected board
- 1,900 employees, including 100-plus providers
- Licensed for 242 patient beds
- Serves a six-county area, with our main campus and several clinics located in Rolla, Missouri, along with additional clinics in Salem, St. James, Vienna and Waynesville, Missouri



Agenda

Rural Approach to Risk Communications

Risk Communications Framework

COVID-19: Phelps Health Case Study



Risk Communications Defined

- Risk is a threat of loss, real or perceived, to that which we value
- Risk communication is the exchange of information about risks
- Science-based discipline
- High concern situations change the rules of communication
- Anticipate, prepare, practice
 - 90% preparation, 10% action

Source: Center for Risk Communication

Who Uses Risk Communications?



Source: Center for Risk
Communication

Risk Communications Theory

- When people are concerned, stressed or upset
 - Trust Determination
 - Mental Noise
 - Negative Dominance
 - Risk Perception/Outrage

Source: Center for Risk Communication

Why Communicate?

- Increase knowledge and understanding
- Increase trust and credibility
- Promote appropriate attitudes, behaviors and beliefs



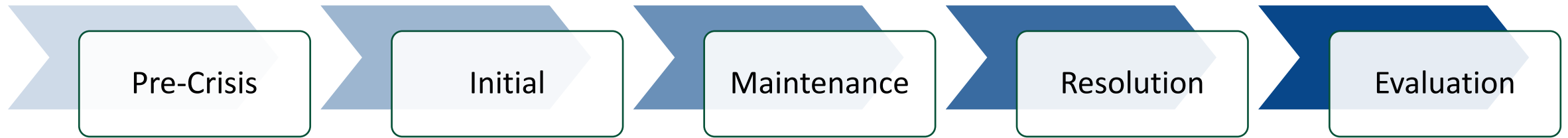
Source: Center for Risk Communication

Types of risks for health systems

- Public Health
- Litigation
- Staff/Employee Issues
- Administrative Issues
- Patient Care Issues
- Structural/Facility Issues
- Cybersecurity

Source: American Society for Healthcare Risk Management

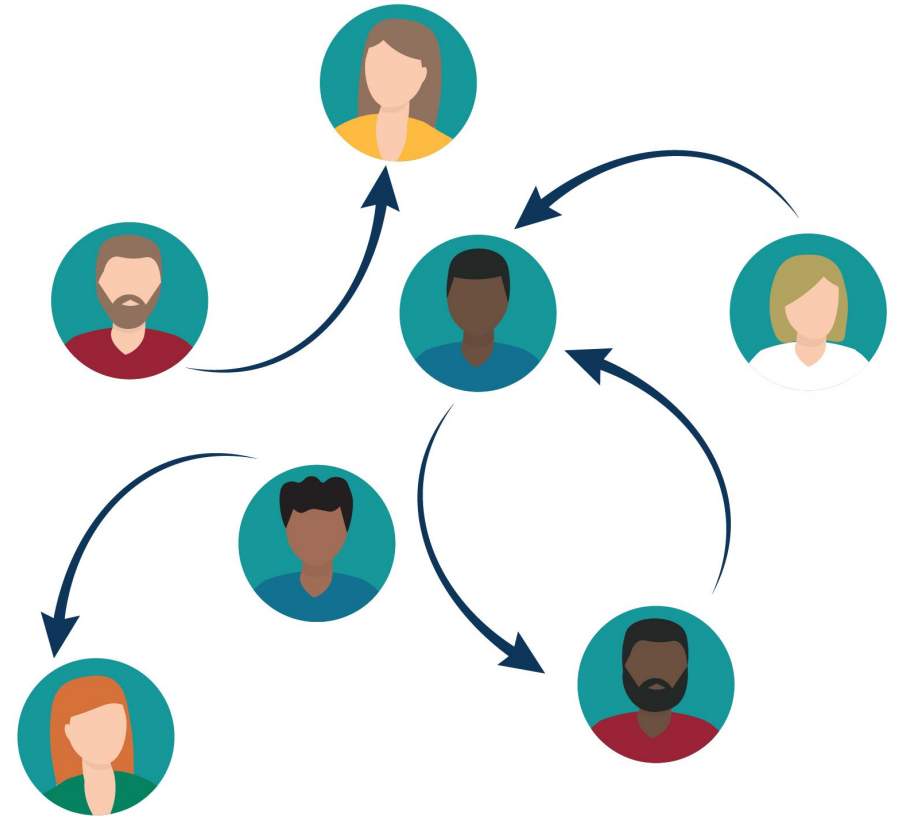
Risk Communication Lifecycle



Source: CDC

Phases of Risk Communication: Pre-Crisis

- Prepare
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test messages
- Evaluate plan



Source: CDC

Phases of Risk Communication: Initial

- Express empathy
- Provide simple risk explanations
- Establish credibility
- Recommend actions
- Commit to stakeholders

Source: CDC

Phases of Risk Communication: Maintenance

- Further explain risk
- Provide more background
- Gain support for response
- Empower risk/benefit decision-making
- Capture feedback for analysis

Source: CDC

Phases of Risk Communication: Resolution

- Educated a primed public for future crises
- Examine problems
- Gain support for policy and resources
- Promote your organization's role

Source: CDC

Phases of Risk Communication: Evaluation

- Capture lessons learned
- Improve plan
- Return to pre-crisis planning



Source: CDC

Framework: Message Map

Stakeholder Question or Concern:

Key Message

Supporting Info 1.1

Supporting Info 1.2

Supporting Info 1.3

Key Message

Supporting Info 2.1

Supporting Info 2.2

Supporting Info 2.3

Key Message

Supporting Info 3.1

Supporting Info 3.2

Supporting Info 3.3

Source: Center for Risk Communication

Phases of Risk Communication: Tips to Consider

- Put the public first
- Take responsibility
- Be transparent
- Designate a spokesperson (PIO)
- Set up central info center
- Provide consistent flow of information
- Be a friend to the media
- Be accessible
- Monitor news coverage and inquiries
- Communicate with key publics

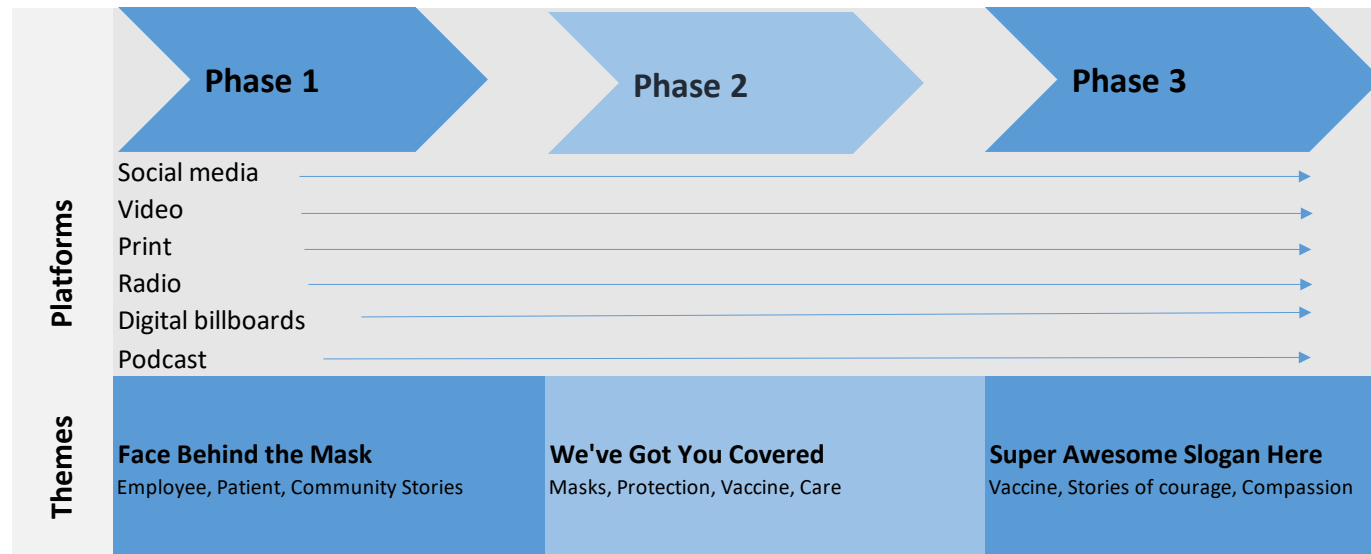
Source: CDC

COVID-19: Phelps Health Case Study



Pre-Crisis: COVID-19 Comms Plan

- March 16, 2020
 - Phelps Health monitoring COVID-19
 - Emergency Operations Center (EOC) set up
 - Develop communications plan



Initial Crisis: COVID-19 Message Map

Stakeholder Question or Concern:

What is COVID-19 and how is it different than other respiratory illnesses and viral infections?

Key Message

What is the coronavirus disease?

Supporting Info 1.1

We are monitoring the situation.

Supporting Info 1.2

We are watching transmission rates.

Supporting Info 1.3

Signs and symptoms to watch for.

Key Message

What precautionary measures is Phelps Health taking?

Supporting Info 2.1

Encouraging people to call ahead.

Supporting Info 2.2

Isolating sick patients.

Supporting Info 2.3

Similar to SARS/MERS, we are testing and encouraging hygiene.

Key Message

What can I do to protect myself and my loved ones?

Supporting Info 3.1

Avoid contact with sick individuals.

Supporting Info 3.2

Practice good hygiene.

Supporting Info 3.3

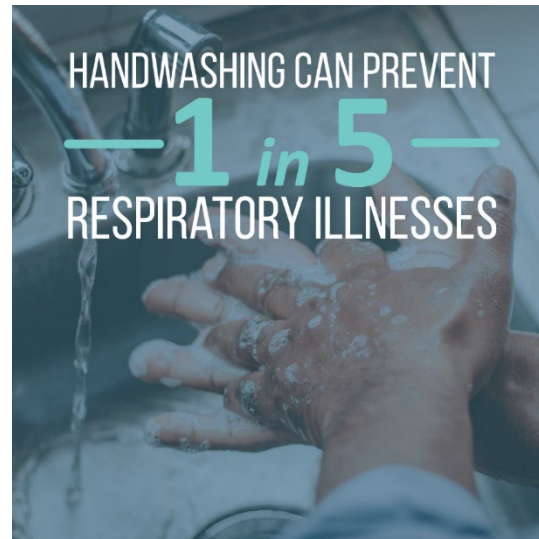
Be cognizant of travel, work, etc. to maintain your health.

Source: Center for Risk Communication

Initial: Goals/Messages

- Internal: Education, Safety, Empowerment
- External: Education, Safety, Trust

Updated
Visitor Restrictions
at Phelps Health
Effective starting April 3



ASSESS YOUR COVID-19 RISK

This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended for providing medical advice, diagnosing or prescribing.

Do you have symptoms? — NO → If you have questions or concerns, but no symptoms, call the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services 24-hour hotline at **(877) 435-8411**.

- Fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

YES ↓

Are you over the age of 65, have chronic health conditions, increasing symptoms or other high risks*? — NO — → If you are young and healthy with mild symptoms (similar to cold symptoms), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that you stay home, avoid public areas, and limit contact with those you live with.

YES ↓

Call the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services 24-hour hotline at **(877) 435-8411** or call your provider's office to find out if you should make an appointment. They can further direct you if COVID-19 testing is recommended.

***High risks include the following:**

- Adults 65 years and older
- Persons with chronic pulmonary (including asthma), heart, kidney, liver, blood disorders, and metabolic disorders (including diabetes), or brain conditions
- Persons with immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or HIV infection
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- Recent travel to affected areas
- Close contact with a confirmed case

← If you have additional questions or concerns, call the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services 24-hour hotline: **(877) 435-8411**

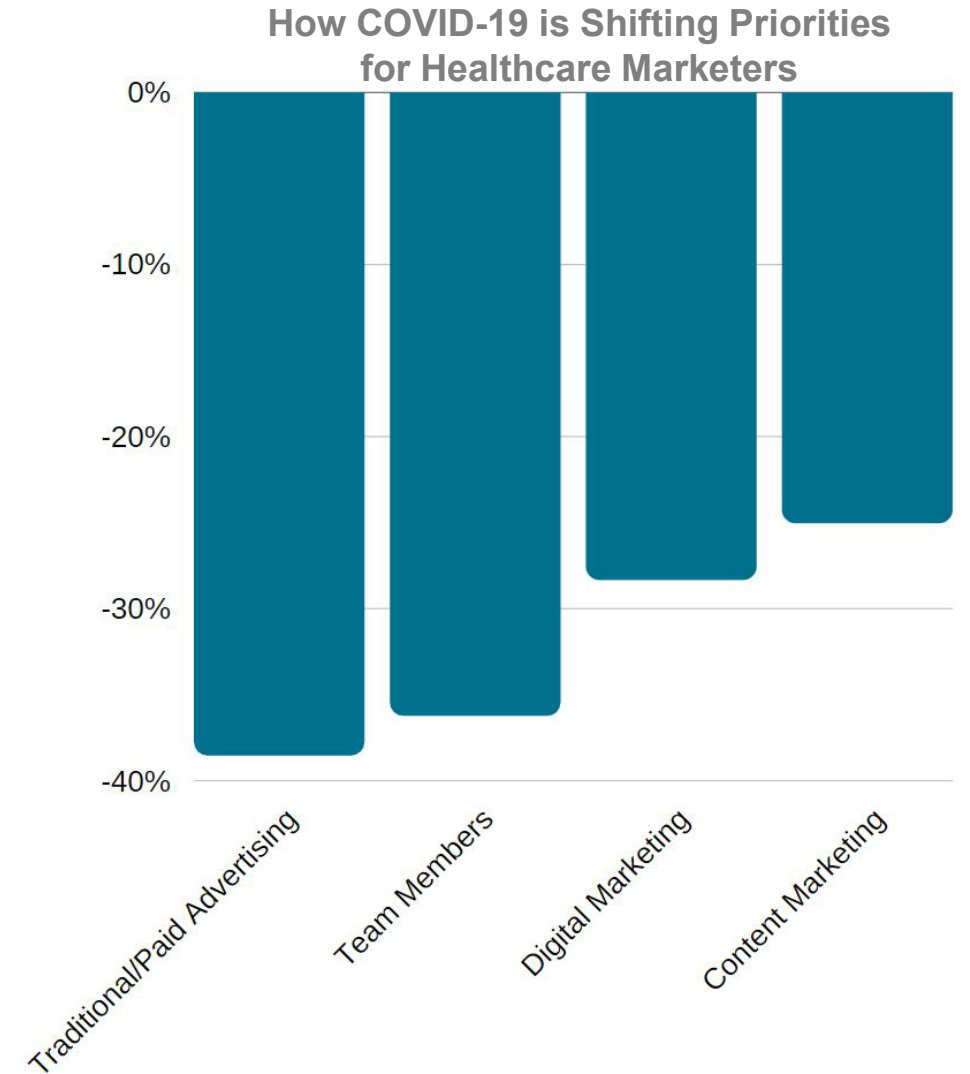
→ **Do you have a life-threatening or urgent health condition?**
Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room immediately

Updated: March 17, 2020

Phelps Health PHELPSHEALTH.ORG

Initial: Mediums

- Less emphasis on traditional, paid media
 - Lower ROI
 - Slower-moving
 - Free media coverage



Source: 2020 Binary Foundation

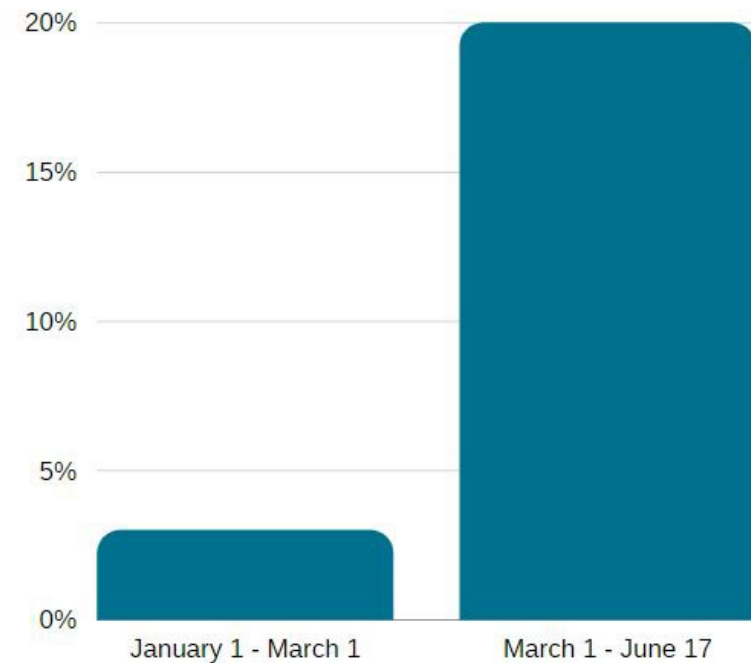
Initial: Mediums

- High ROI, low cost
 - Social media
 - Website
 - Digital sign
 - Video

Profile frame for social media created awareness and unity during the pandemic.



Total Page Likes on Facebook 2020



Maintenance: COVID-19 Message Map

Stakeholder Question or Concern:

What do I do if I have COVID-19? What is Phelps Health doing about COVID-19?

Key Message

How are we caring for you?

Supporting Info 1.1

Check out our map with local data.

Supporting Info 1.2

We're here to safely care for you.

Supporting Info 1.3

You can schedule via telehealth for your appointments.

Key Message

Here's what you can do to protect yourself.

Supporting Info 2.1

Practice good hygiene.

Supporting Info 2.2

Be careful about visiting areas with high transmission rates.

Supporting Info 2.3

Protect yourself and loved ones by following CDC guidelines.

Key Message

Here are treatment and status updates for COVID-19.

Supporting Info 3.1

Disease progression updates via DHSS and CDC.

Supporting Info 3.2

Prevalence (data) in your area.

Supporting Info 3.3

Treatment and caring for yourself if you have COVID-19.

Source: Center for Risk Communication

Maintenance: Messaging

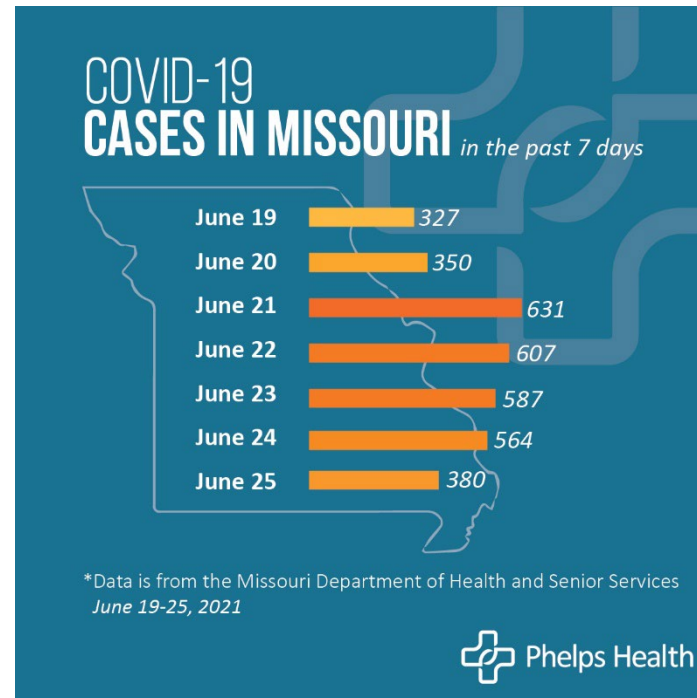
- Open, Safe and Ready
- Don't delay care
- Telehealth
- Trust and confidence

TELEHEALTH VISITS

A safe, secure and confidential way for you to visit remotely with your provider from your smartphone.

[LEARN MORE](#)

 Phelps Health



YOUR VISIT AT PHELPS HEALTH

We are open, safe and ready to help you with your healthcare needs.

UNIVERSAL MASKING REQUIREMENTS
When visiting Phelps Health, you should either bring a face mask or one will be provided for you. All staff will be wearing face masks in Phelps Health facilities.

WELLNESS SCREENING STATION
Mandatory wellness screenings include checking for temperature, respiratory symptoms and performing hand hygiene.

SOCIAL DISTANCING
Waiting room seating is spaced to promote social distancing. Keep in mind visitor restrictions. Call your provider's office if you aren't sure if you can bring someone with you to your appointment.

CLEANING AND SANITIZATION
Cleaning procedures are in place to protect you and Phelps Health staff and include the following:
• Frequent hand hygiene
• Thorough cleaning of exam rooms and frequently touched surfaces



Maintenance: Mediums

- Reintroducing traditional mediums
- GeoFencing
- Maintain strong social media presence
 - Your Next Appointment (Video)
 - Telehealth Visit (Video)
 - Social Media Telehealth Visit Ad
 - The Scope podcast

Resolution

- Revised Strategy
 - Perception, Progress, People
 - Testimonials
 - Shift from patient to clinician and administrator focus
 - Daily themes targeted to specific demographic groups



Evaluation: Successes

- Responsive on social media
- Competitive against larger health systems (Cox, Mercy, MU Health)
- Consistent, reliable internal communication
- Senior leadership support
- Employee testimonials
- Smooth and coordinated transition back to service line marketing

Evaluation: Growth Opportunities

- Data and reporting transparency
- Buy-in and collaboration between local health systems, organizations and other local businesses
- Include legal/compliance in communication efforts
- Create a defined risk communications plan for quicker response



Resources

- [Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication \(CERC\)](#)
- [Center for Risk Communication](#)
- [American Society for Health Care Risk Management](#)