

Effectively Communicate Your District's Risk Management and Safety Program.

Another holiday season has passed, a season in which we often hear a song that urges well wishes for kids aged 1 to 92. We already know that communicating across generational divides can be difficult. As a school district, you have stakeholders of different ages and backgrounds. You have to share important safety and risk-based information with students, employees, parents and community members while overcoming the hurdles of these divides.

That's why districts need to carefully plan how to communicate your safety and risk management plans to meet the needs of all stakeholders. A few things for you to think about include:

- **Generational:** It's normal to discuss the communication differences in various generations. As a district you have a responsibility to the public regardless of their generation. Your challenge is to understand the preferences of different generation and find methods to meet the needs of your stakeholders.
- **Technology:** Much like generational differences, stakeholders have a wide range of technological capabilities. When you consider the range of smart phones to paper mail, your challenge is to identify the most effective way to reach all of your audiences in this modern age. Districts must remember that delivering consistent messages through multiple platforms will be key to reaching your audience.
- **Language:** Every school district in Wisconsin has stakeholders whose first language is not English. It's important to understand the various languages spoken by your stakeholders so that your safety and risk management messages are available in all formats. When an individual receives information in their native language, they are more likely to consume and understand that message. In a safety situation, you want everyone to understand how to react.
- **Comprehension:** Too often, regardless of industry, we communicate with too much jargon. When developing your safety and risk management plans, it's easy to leverage terms that are normally used at school or by risk management experts. Unfortunately most people doesn't use that jargon, and districts would be well-served by removing such jargon from their plans.
- **Education:** When working with a large audience, please keep in mind that you need to deliver messages which can be easily comprehended by those of varied educational levels.

As a district, you have many resources to help you build your safety and risk management messages. Those resources include state and federal agencies, non-for-profit experts and your insurance partners. When you build your plan to deliver these messages, consider including community input in your communication planning and delivery efforts. By working your stakeholders, you can build stronger relationships and engagement into your overall goals.

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