

# A Path Forward: Improving Crisis Communication with Parents and Families

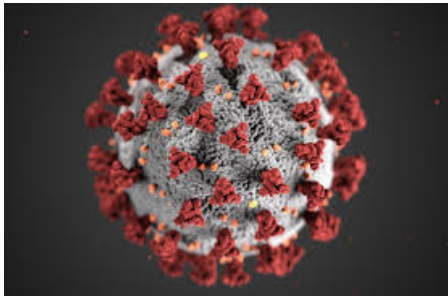




## Today's objective:

Practical tools to improve  
crisis communication with  
parents and families

# Crisis in Review



# Crisis on Campus

## Campus Events...

### Examples

- Student Death
- Hate Crime
- Free Speech
- Sexual Assault
- Leadership Scandal
- Facilities Issue



## External Factors...

### Examples

- Public Health
- Natural Disaster
- Community Safety/ Crime
- Political Environment
- Social Movements

## 4 Building Blocks of Crisis Communication

### Accuracy

Responses must be based on best available data

### Credibility

Credibility is crucial for building trust

### Consistency

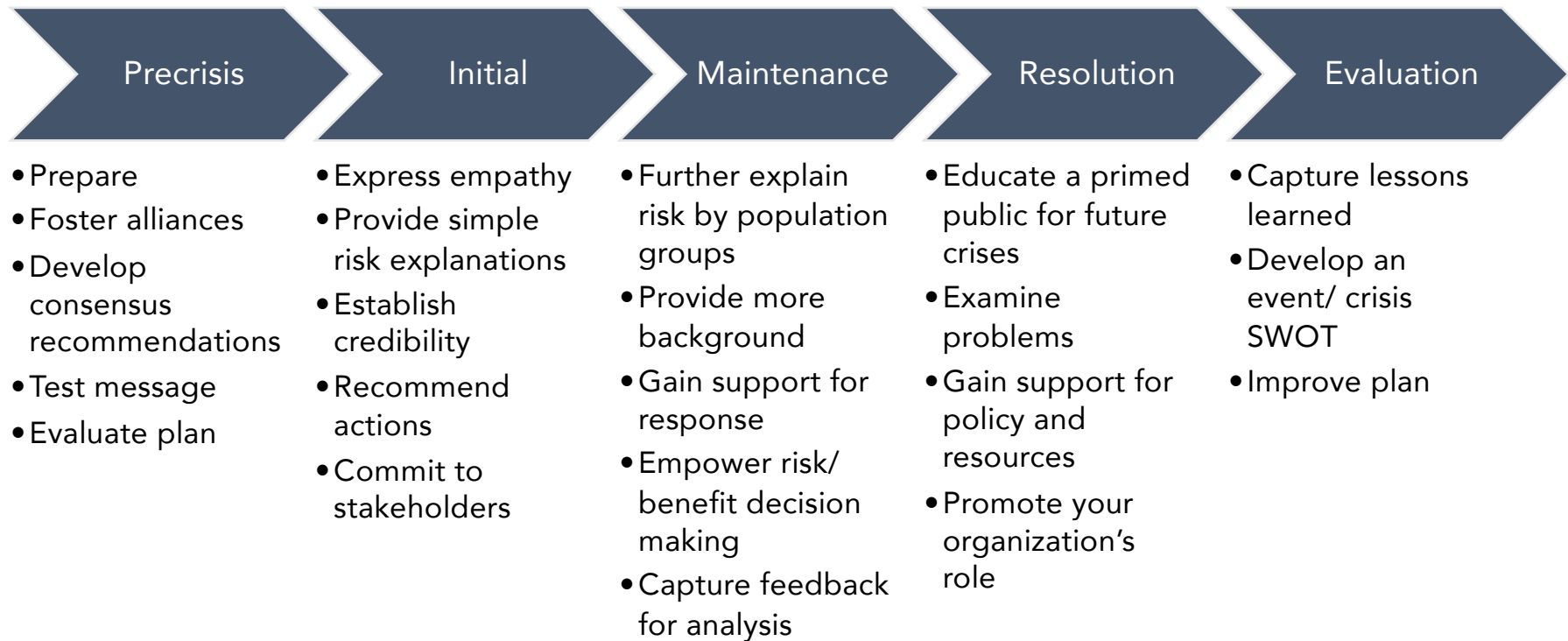
Inconsistent information can undermine integrity

### Timeliness

Coordinated plans improve timeliness of response



# Crisis Communication Lifecycle





## 3 Steps To Improve Crisis Communication with Parents and Families

01

**Engage Campus Partners**

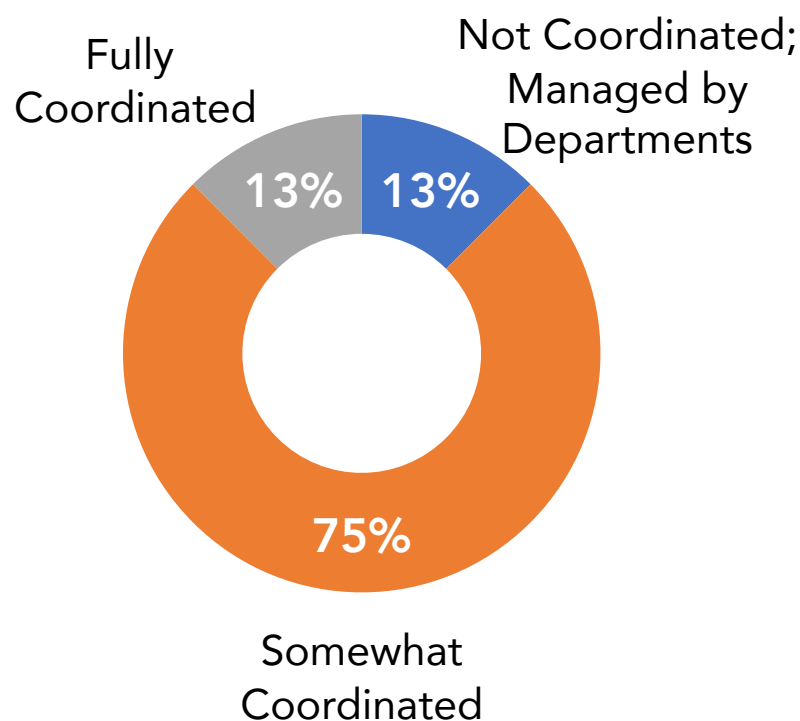
02

**Facilitate a Crisis SWOT**

03

**Improve Your Plan**

# 1. Engage Your Campus Partners



88% of AHEPPP Crisis Institute participants reported that communication with campus partners was somewhat coordinated or not coordinated



# 1. Engage Your Campus Partners

Level of Parent/Family Program Involvement  
(1-Low, 5-High)

AHEPPP members  
report some strong  
partnerships

Many partnerships  
continue at moderate-  
to-low levels

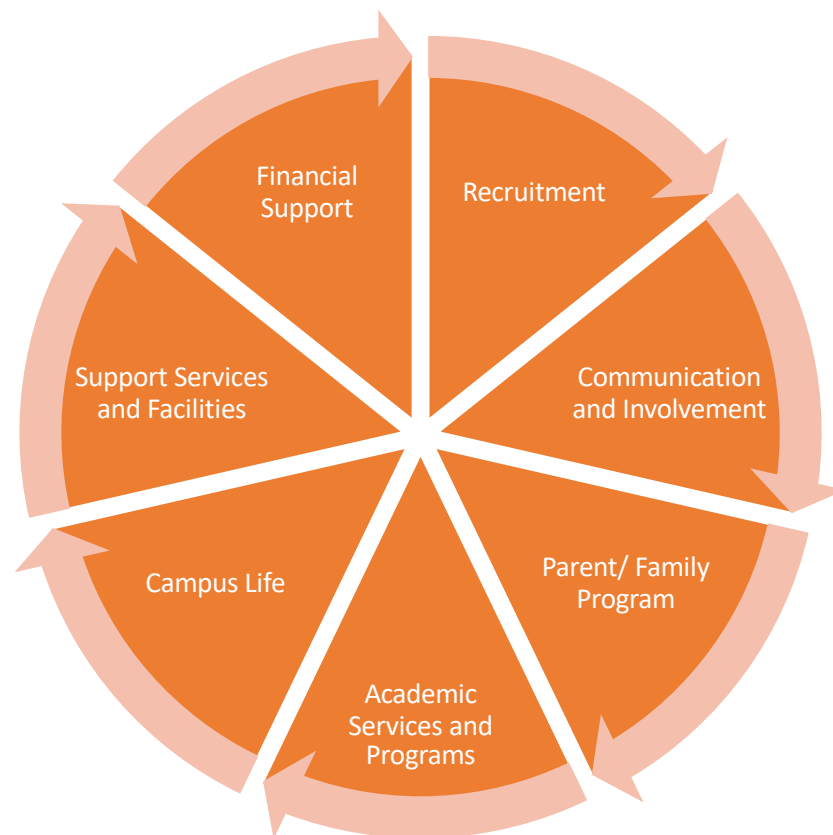
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID
Marketing and Communications	3.5	4.1
Housing/Dining	3.8	4.1
Admissions/Enrollment	3.6	4.0
Student Affairs	3.8	3.9
Campus Health and Wellness	3.4	3.7
Student Success	3.6	3.6
University Advancement	3.4	3.4
Academic Affairs/ Provost	2.8	3.2
Police/ Emergency	2.6	2.9
Finance and Administration	2.6	2.8
President/Chancellor	2.4	2.8
General Counsel	.9	1.7

# Activity 1: Identify Your Partners

Your role is to help your internal partners understand the importance of families as key stakeholders



Write the names of key partners aligned with area of responsibility



## 2. Facilitate a Crisis SWOT

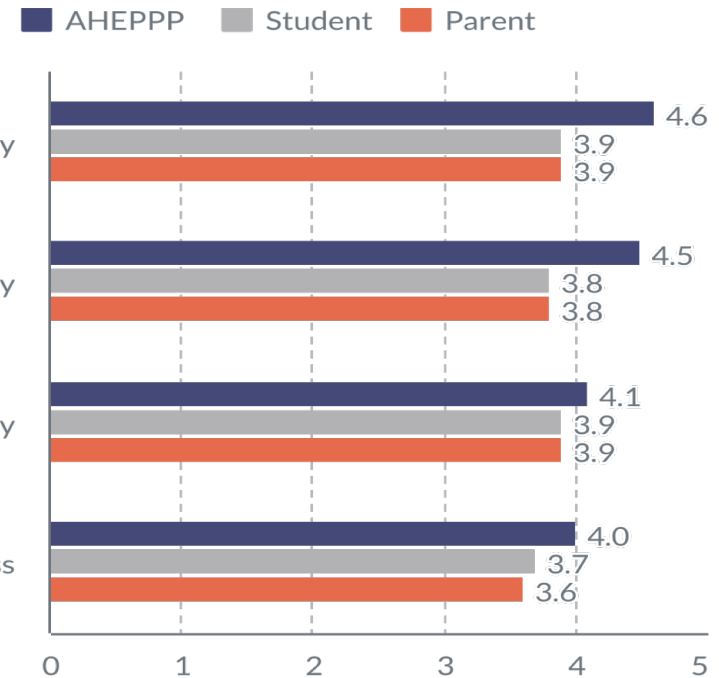
**TIP** – Gather different perspectives in evaluating your campus response

Students and parents had a less positive view than AHEPPP members around crisis communication

Timeliness was the greatest concern for all groups



Campus Crisis Communication  
Overall Effectiveness  
(1-Very Bad, 5-Very Good)



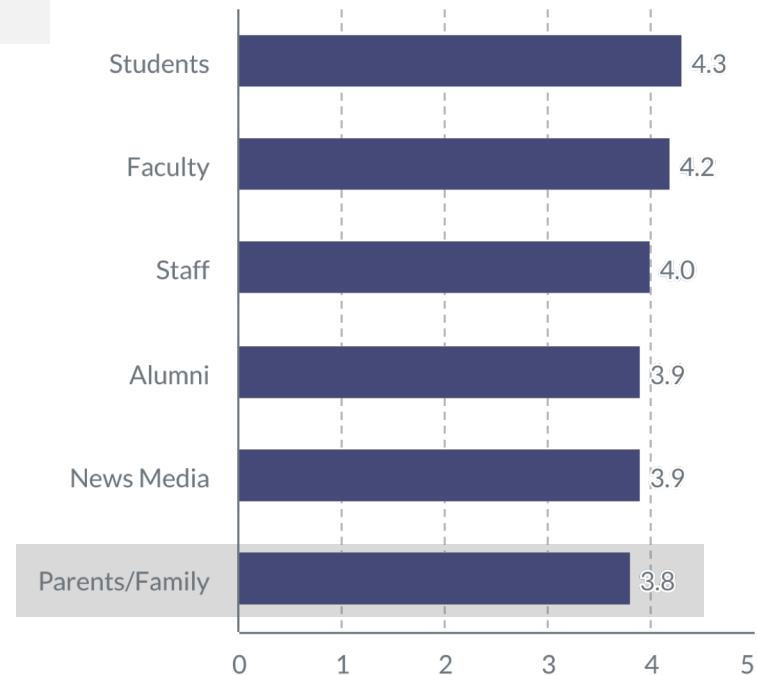
## 2. Facilitate a Crisis SWOT

**TIP** – Be honest; do not shy away from areas for improvement

AHEPPP members rated communication to parents and families as the lowest of all stakeholder groups



Campus Crisis Communication  
Effectiveness by Stakeholder Group  
(1-Very Bad, 5-Very Good)





### 3. Develop a Plan

- ✓ **Take the Parent and Family Perspective:** Know your parent and family concerns and needs before crisis hits
- ✓ **Clarify Lanes:** Coordination across a team of campus partners is needed for consistency; clear roles and responsibilities are essential
- ✓ **Personalize:** One size does not fit all; different families face different challenges in a crisis
- ✓ **Build Trust:** Cultivate relationships with parent and families prior to crisis
- ✓ **Improve Timeliness:** Be prepared for a timely response

## Activity 2:

### Leading from Where You Are

Assume that you are unlikely to be “at the table” where crisis communication decisions are being made for a future crisis



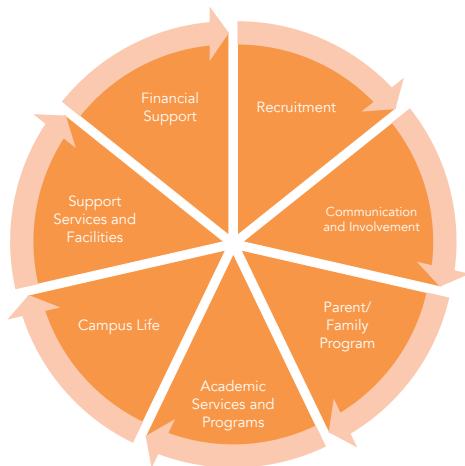
Review your key internal partners from Activity 1

- Who can help you “communicate up” about the need to effectively communicate with families?
- Where are your gaps?



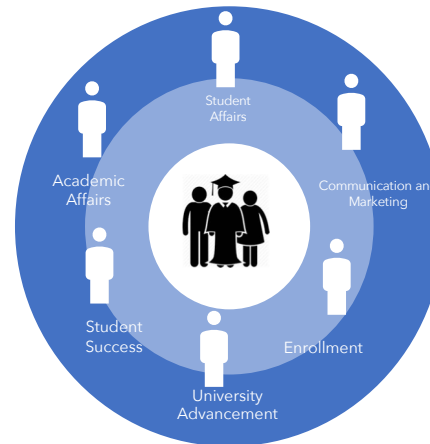
What can you do to gain support for a crisis de-brief?

# TorchStar Can Help You



## Campus Partner De-Brief

- Internal assessment



## Campus Partner Engagement

- Facilitated sessions
- Crisis SWOT



## Coordinated Plan

- Campus partner roles
- Coordinated response

# TorchStar Education is a higher education consulting firm



- **Insights and Analytics**
  - Students
  - Parents and Families
- **Strategy and Roadmap Development**
  - Retention and Graduation Improvement
  - Parent and Family Engagement
  - Strategic Planning (University, Division, Unit)
- **Organizational Design**
- **Communication Strategy**
- **Change Management and Implementation**





**Thank You!**

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