



Communications Plan
2011-2013
Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority

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Why does GASHA need a communication plan?

Communication plans, particularly focused on healthcare will help our facilities, programs and services to set priorities and focus resources where they are most needed. If we do not have a plan, we run the risk of putting the District in a situation to be “off message”.

When delivering messages, we need to know who are target audience is, which will help to clarify our message. We also need to know, in particular circumstances who is best to deliver the message for maximum impact and enhanced credibility. In hospitals as in almost all organizations, there is an internal and an external public, who often can receive similar messaging with some distinct differences.

This plan is a guide whenever GASHA is communicating with the public, stakeholders and policy makers, in this case, the Department of Health and Wellness.

Organizational Background

The Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) is one of nine district health authorities plus the IWK established by the Nova Scotia Department of Health on January 1, 2001, following the proclamation of Bill 34, the Health Authorities Act. The district health authorities were created to bring healthcare decision making closer to the community level and improve accountability for healthcare decision making. These health authorities deliver health care services to residents and are responsible for all hospitals, community health services, mental health services and public health programs in their districts.

GASHA delivers healthcare services to 44,500 residents in Antigonish Town and County, Guysborough County, Richmond County and the southern portion of Inverness County.

Approximately 1400 staff and 73 medical staff work in GASHA to deliver healthcare services to residents in the District.

- St. Martha's Regional Hospital
- Strait Richmond Hospital
- Guysborough Memorial Hospital
- St. Mary's Memorial Hospital
- Eastern Memorial Hospital

Programs in GASHA

- Public Health Services
- Addiction Services
- Mental Health Services
- Continuing Care
- Primary Health Care

Guided by a volunteer Board of Directors, GASHA's mandate is to:

- Govern, manage, plan , monitor, evaluate and deliver health services according to the healthcare needs of our District
- Maintain and improve the health of our residents
- Determine priorities and allocate resources accordingly
- Implement business plans which incorporate health plans developed by our three community health boards.

Community Health Boards

In 1999 the Health Authorities Act was passed in Nova Scotia giving Community Health Boards (CHBs) a legislated role in the health system.

A CHB is a committed group of volunteers from the community who are working together to improve the health of the community. The CHB acts as an Advisory Board to the District Health Authority (DHA) which is the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA). In GASHA, there are three CHBs, the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board, the Guysborough County Community Health Board and the Strait-Richmond Community Health Board.

CHB members are selected under an open and transparent process determined by the CHB in accordance with the guidelines and criteria established by the Minister. The CHB members must live within the boundaries of the community that the CHB represents.

What Does a Community Health Board Do?

- Helps people have a voice in local health planning;
- Finds out about community health needs;
- Identifies ways to make our communities healthier;
- Develops community health plans that make recommendations to the District Health Authority (GASHA) to improve health programs and services for our communities;
- Takes action on factors that influence health like poverty, education, and employment. See also the determinants of health;
- Helps educate our communities about health and the health care system;
- Distributes community wellness grants.

Communications Objectives:

Management and staff are responsible for overall leadership in providing a positive communications climate. In order for information and decision making to be effective, two way communication between management and employees is key.

Internal Audience-Senior Leadership to management and staff

- Build staff understanding of GASHA's future goals, its current financial situation and the case for change based on our organization's values and evolving strategic directions
- Ensure managers understand and accept their role in the communications process
- Ensure employees understand they are valued, have the information necessary to do their jobs and are willing to be our ambassadors for the facilities and will help build the District's reputation
- Provide employees with information before or simultaneous with its release to the public whenever possible
- Ensure available technology is fully levered as a business and communications tool (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs).

Responsibility of Senior Management in Decisions Affecting Union Locals

- Ensure that all Managers affected are aware of the information before it is released to union members.
- Inform the Union Executive of the information before or simultaneous with its release to the employees, whenever possible.
- The Manager will inform affected individual members as soon as possible, thereafter.

Responsibilities of Employees

Each employee must feel a responsibility to be well informed and to provide feedback.

They must:

- Keep well informed about the District by keeping up to date on internal communication documents in addition to announcements and releases.
- Communicate to management and staff ideas, opinions, suggestions and the progress of work-related activities.

External Audience: All

- Build awareness and understanding of the District's desired future, the current financial pressures and the need for change while still maintaining the current level of health care delivery without impacting patient safety.
- Continue to build capacity with the Acadian, French, First Nations and other represented cultures within GASHA to ensure they are represented/included in healthcare delivery and planning.
- Build awareness of the District's role and services offered to the communities it serves as well as its role in promoting, supporting and participating in ongoing community development and through the promotion of primary health care initiatives.
- Manage and protect the District's reputation with key stakeholders-build trust, support and community pride for the District
- Ensure available technology is maximized as communication tools.

Communications 'Roles and Goals' Breakdown of Hospital Staff

Board of Directors	Leverage their community networks, serve as community ambassadors and highlight how the District is meeting the healthcare needs of the community with the resources available.
CEO and Senior Leadership Team	The CEO will be the Chief Communications Officer. The CEO is the communicator of the District's overall business strategy. The behaviors and actions of the leadership team must create a culture that fosters two way communication.
Managers and Directors	Understand that communication is part of the management role that well done will increase overall District effectiveness. Respected front-line managers build credibility for new initiatives with other employees.
Medical Staff/Hospital Staff/ Hospital Foundation/Auxiliary/ Volunteers/CHBs	Serve as community ambassadors, highlighting how GASHA is meeting the healthcare needs of the District. Understand the work underway to ensure the District's long-term viability and sustainability.
Champions	Identify communicators, opinion leaders in the workplace to help mobilize employees and other stakeholders. Ensure stakeholders are equipped with the skills to deliver tailored messages, prompt open discussion and provide timely feedback

Roles and Goals External Stakeholders

Patients and their families	Patients can help make their health care experience safer by becoming active, involved and informed members of the health care team. The more information patients have about health care, the better they can make decisions about what is best for them. When patients feel involved in their healthcare, they can be leveraged as community ambassadors to share experiences.
Foundation and Auxiliary Donors	Know that their support is valued and is making a tangible difference in delivery of care at their hospital. Understand the work underway aims to ensure the hospital's long-term viability and sustainability in the community.
Government and Non Government Affiliates	Need to create an awareness that the District: Is the point of excellent care within its mandate. Serves the healthcare needs of the community Will use health care resources in the most efficient and cost effective way
Sisters of Saint Martha	See below

Sisters of Saint Martha

The history of St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish is a century-old story of people responding to the health needs of the communities served. The philosophy and culture of the hospital is rooted in a strong tradition of the religious values of collaboration, service, teamwork and community support.

The Sisters of St. Martha owned and governed this institution from its foundation in 1906 until September 30, 1996, when St. Martha's became part of the Eastern Regional Health Services. Prior to the transfer of ownership the sisters, in collaboration with St. Martha's Board of Directors, negotiated a Mission Assurance Agreement with the Government of Nova Scotia. The agreement assures the continuation of the traditional identity, mission and philosophy of the hospital. The values which constitute the essence of the agreement are in reality those chosen and upheld by the people of the communities served.

The Mission Assurance Agreement is supported and monitored by the Mission Assurance Advisory Council comprised of members from the local communities, the hospital and the sisters. Within the hospital, the essential components of the Agreement are implemented through a staff Mission Committee, a Mission Coordinator and the Department of Spiritual and Religious Care.

Communication Venues

Communications include all written, spoken, and electronic interaction with defined audiences. A communication plan encompasses objectives, goals, and tools for all communications, including but not limited to:

Internal Stakeholders

- GASHA Bulletins: Email for mass communications
- GASHA Intranet-internal website for staff and physicians to access information
- Newsletter: Promotes awareness of events (current and upcoming) and gives staff the opportunity to contribute articles of general interest. Newsletter can be easily modified depending on circumstance (i.e. H1N1 information)
- Managers Meetings: All Managers meetings are held twice a year and District Managers every second month.
- Information Sessions to highlight time-sensitive issues (H1N1, pay parking etc)
- Print communications (posters, memos, news releases)
- Focus groups and surveys
- Patient Safety Walk rounds
- Recognition ceremonies at all facilities provide an opportunity to engage staff in discussions
- Online feedback form

External Stakeholders:

- Press releases, news conferences, Open Houses/Town Halls
- Advertising to mark health promotion days/weeks/months (Patient Safety Week, nutrition month etc)
- Recruitment Fairs for various professions
- Annual General Meeting, Report to the Community/Newsletters
- www.gasha.nshealth.ca
- Service and program specific materials
- Submissions to local newspapers including profile pieces
- Suggestion Boxes
- Bonjour! Program and other signage

Upcoming Communications Opportunities

- The external GASHA website was redesigned in 2010. There are still elements which require additional work in order to make it more user friendly for the public and staff. Plans are underway for the website to be connected to other GASHA affiliated websites such as Health Connections and the Community Health Board website.
- The GASHA Intranet (internal site) requires some modifications, mainly aesthetic to ensure it has maximized usage and is a communications tool used by staff for staff.
- A 'Compliments and Complaints' section was added to the GASHA external website and is a great medium to receive feedback on staff and service delivery.
- The Cultural Competency Committee will now be known as the Social Justice and Inclusion Committee, which will work to reflect throughout the District, the various cultures in GASHA.
- Continue with branding efforts in GASHA. Currently, there are templates for PowerPoint's, invitations and brochures for staff to access for promotional purposes.

Assessment and Evaluation *Why evaluate communications?*

- Evaluation improves the effectiveness of communication and can help to engage target audiences.
- Evaluate situation change-to see if strategies and tactics need to change.
- Evaluate to allocate resources wisely, to see if they could be redistributed more effectively to achieve desired results.
- Quantitative/Qualitative

- Media monitoring-Local media coverage (mainly via news releases issued)
- Editions of the newsletter per year
- Use of suggestion box and comment line (both staff and public)
- Internal publications printed and designed such as the Annual Report, brochures and posters
- Feedback from Senior Leadership Team, Board of Directors and Community Health Boards, staff and physicians