Communications Checklist for Public Entity Risk Pools

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Long before the first phone call from a concerned stakeholder, public entity risk pools should build a foundational media relations program. Identify key stakeholders among, for example, your members, prospects, regulators, elected officials, and select journalists. Build relationships with these individuals before you need them. This will make it easier to manage challenging interactions. The effectiveness of the following checklist for event-driven interactions will depend on the strength of these relationships.

☐ 1. *Learn as much as possible about the stakeholder's inquiry.*
- When a stakeholder raises a question or concern, ask questions to learn as much as possible about the details of their interest and concern.
- Answer no questions on the fly.
- Offer only to look into the inquiry. This leaves flexibility for no response, for an emailed response, or for a detailed response.
- Schedule any formal interaction – a caller meeting – with enough time to prepare.

☐ 2. *Review the pool's communications protocols.*
- Review who must be notified and who speaks to this particular stakeholder.
- Review who prepares, approves, and delivers any communications to this stakeholder.
- Decide if the crisis warrants outside legal, PR, or government relations counsel.

☐ 3. *Review the pool's standing, evergreen messaging.*
- Use three key messages, each supported by three or more proof points.
- Focus on jargon-free messaging on the pool, its mission, and its record.
- Proof points are facts, statistics, anecdotes, and examples.

☐ 4. *Draft event-specific messaging in the same 3x3 format.*

☐ 5. *Create messaging-based documents as needed.*
- Possibilities: letters to members, prospects, or government officials; media statements; talking points for calls/visits; website/newsletter copy; staff emails.

☐ 6. *Identify and prepare messengers.*
- Choose messengers based on their communications training experience, availability, skills, and other situation-specific needs.

☐ 7. *Identify all message targets and message-delivery tactics.*
- Targets should include employees, affected parties, and regular audiences.
- Tactics can include phone calls, face-to-face meetings, media statements or interviews, and stories posted to websites.

☐ 8. *Deliver the message via the agreed-upon delivery tactics.*

☐ 9. *Track reactions to the communication – with follow-up calls or meetings, Google news alerts, and so on.*

☐ 10. *Review all outcomes and plan follow-up communications as needed.*