Communication Planning for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

External communication planning requires careful, step-by-step work by a team of people, including program leadership. Communication is a powerful tool, always deployed with certain organizational goals in mind. Team thinking and decision-making is required. Those goals should align with your program's mission and strategic plan. In short, communication planning requires "big" conversations, and you need to set time aside for it.

Think about these questions:

1. Why do you want to improve or refine your external communication?

2. What are your goals?

3. What audiences do you need to reach and influence to achieve your goals?

4. What benchmarks will indicate you're succeeding?

5. How will the work unfold, step by step?

6. Who will do what?

7. What's your timeline?

8. How will you know if you've been successful?

9. What communications infrastructure (e.g., hardware, software, staff, and funding) is available for this work?

Use the table below to plan your communication strategy. Each goal should have its own target audience, positioning statement, desired actions, communication platforms, and logistical details.

Communication Plan

Goals: (e.g., encourage families to enroll; increase donations; solicit volunteers with particular skill sets; build support among community leaders for a new program)
Target audience: (e.g., lower-income parents of young children who are new to the community; adults over 21 in the community who have volunteered in the past; education leaders)
Positioning statement: This is the core message you are sending to your audience; it tells them your services can provide a resource or service they value.
Action you want your audience to take: You want something to be different as a result of your communication. What is it? Do you want enrolled families to make sure their children get to the program on time? Do you want volunteers with computer skills to spend a few hours per week teaching your staff a new software program?
Platforms you will use: The platforms you use should match the preferences of the audience you seek to reach.
Campaign details: (e.g., how often message will appear on which platforms, staff involved in creating and posting messages)

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