

OIHCD COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Creating a Communications Policy

I. What is a Communication Policy?

A Communication Policy is a living, breathing document used to align internal and external communications with the goals, objectives, and key messages of the Orcas Island Health Care District (OIHCD). The Policy will help to prioritize needs, identify audiences, determine the message and how it is delivered, identify a spokesperson, and measure whether the communication effort was successful.

II. Guiding Principles

When dealing with the public, it's important to establish a set of guidelines that inform all types of communication. These principles include:

- Taking the time to understand the concerns of the community.
- Tailoring communications to the positive resolution of community problems and/or concerns.
- Speaking in plain, understandable language and avoiding the use of technical jargon.
- Promptly returning phone calls or e-mails, and when more time is needed to gather a response letting the inquirer know when he/she can expect an answer. When responding to inquiries from the media asking, "When is your deadline?" then try to respect that deadline.
- Acting as an ambassador for OIHCD whenever engaging in the community, and always communicating in a respectful and professional manner to uphold the standards of conduct for OIHCD.

III. Policy Elements

Strategic Communication Principles

The following core principles guide how OIHCD engages internal and external audiences, key stakeholders, and community members.

When decisions have been made and actions taken, all OIHCD communication will focus on the facts that led to the decision or action. Communication will be proactive, and every effort will be made to ensure facts are complete, accurate and unbiased. The OIHCD strives to provide information in a transparent and easy to access manner.

OIHCD Spokesperson

For OIHCD inquiries, the spokesperson will most often be the Superintendent. This includes inquiries for all sensitive and/or controversial issues relating to the OIHCD. This extends to communicating during public safety issues/emergencies. The Superintendent will keep all members of the Board of Commissioners informed of communication with the public of any sensitive nature.

The OIHCD engages with a broad range of stakeholders and should determine if the way in which communication is handled should be varied based on audience. Below is a list of internal and external stakeholders:

- **Orcas Island residents**
- **Orcas Island visitors**
- **UW Medicine**
- **Orcas Family Health Center**
- **Orcas Fire/EMS**
- **The Sounder Publications**
- **Orcas Issues**
- **Orcas Island Family Resource Center**
- **Rays Pharmacy**
- **Other Community partners – Orcas Island Hospice and Home Support, Orcas Island Library, Orcas Island Schools, Orcas Island Community Foundation and other non-profits**
- **Businesses**
- **San Juan County Sheriff's Office**
- **Other elected officials – county, state and federal**
- **WA Association of Public Hospital Districts**
- **Other Rural Public Hospital Districts**

IV. Communication Principles and Channels

Goals for all OIHCD communication

- a. Provide complete, timely and accurate information to all residents, key stakeholders and visitors.
- b. Receive input from all community members, key stakeholders and visitors regarding the provision of health care on Orcas Island and the operation of the OIHCD.
- c. Respond to public records requests in a timely and appropriate manner.

Possible vehicles for communication channels include:

District website	Surveys
Local News Media	Needs Assessment
Social Media	Newsletter
Town Halls	

V. Specific Communication Vehicles: Goals and Action Steps

A) Website Services

Goals:

Use OIHCD's website to communicate District information and activities to the members of the community and other key stakeholders.

Provide a mechanism for members of the community to share with the Board and Superintendent information that is timely and/or of concern as it pertains to health care on Orcas Island.

Action Steps:

1. Regularly post information to www.orcashealth.org (e.g. Board materials, meeting minutes, Policies, Resolutions and Decisions)
2. Create mechanisms for members of the community and other key stakeholders to easily contact Commissioners or the Superintendent through the website.
3. Design and produce easily understandable informational materials to be placed on the website regarding OIHCD business (like the budget and the levy) and healthcare in our community.
4. Ensure standardized metrics that can compare UW Medicine and OFHC patient satisfaction and patient outcomes and conveying that data to the members of our community.

B) Social Media

Goals: Use OIHCD's social media presence to communicate District information and activities to the community and other key stakeholders.

Action Steps:

1. Share information via OIHCD's social media site(s) adhering to the OIHCD Social Media Policy. Design and produce easily understandable informational materials to be placed on social media regarding healthcare in our community.
2. Actively post to social media and determine when messaging should be tailored to target specific audiences.
3. Utilize video, digital and multimedia content to support and enhance communication.
4. Manage content contributed by all parties, approve all comments before making public.
5. Update the Social Media Policy on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness.

C) Media Relations

Goals: Be responsive, timely and accurate regarding media inquiries. Proactively promote OIHCD information as media stories and ensure media coverage for special events.

Action Steps:

1. Establish contact database and distribute media releases, when appropriate.
2. Establish direct relationships with reporters to fact check articles, discuss content for articles, and conduct interviews.
3. Coordinate OIHCD media efforts with UW Medicine and OFHC.
4. Design and produce easily understandable informational materials to be submitted to media outlets regarding OIHCD business (like the budget and levy) and healthcare in our community.
5. Ensure standardized metrics that can compare UW Medicine and OFHC patient satisfaction and patient outcomes and conveying that data to the members of our community.
6. Customize media relations efforts for specific outlets (e.g. Hispanic media).
7. Hold one-on-one meetings with Commissioners and key stakeholders to develop and plan media strategies.
8. Identify method to receive media inquiries and notify Commissioners and key stakeholders.

D) Community Relations

Goals: Establish proactive community engagement with the public at large, County government leaders and other organizations interested in the delivery of health care or health care related services in the community.

Action Steps:

1. Utilize surveys, Town Hall meetings, and other activities designed to engage the community in the health care discussion.
2. Respond to public records requests in a timely and efficient manner.
3. Hold community meetings and meet with key stakeholders to share OIHCD priorities, activities, and provide insights into major initiatives.
4. Speak to groups and organizations proactively and regularly about OIHCD activities and priorities to ensure alignment and encourage collaboration.
5. Publish a newsletter (frequency TBD) in collaboration with UW Medicine and OFHC that presents clear and coordinated messaging and includes timely information that delivers value to recipients.
6. Help plan and execute community meetings with other key stakeholders, as needed.

E) Needs Assessment

Goals: Inventory existing health care resources and needs to identify possible gaps in care or coverage.

Action steps:

1. Conduct an assessment to determine what healthcare services members of our community would like to receive that are not presently provided and how much they are willing to pay for those additional services.

VI. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

In the event of a major crisis or incident, the Superintendent and OIHCD Board Chair will create a crisis team. The Superintendent is designated as District spokesperson unless he/she chooses to designate another individual to serve as spokesperson. All information regarding the crisis is to be immediately communicated to the crisis management team. No statements will be made to the media until the crisis team has time to assess impact of the crisis. The crisis team, through the designated spokesperson, will release all information and will engage with the media. Members of the media should be guided to a designated location where they can monitor the crisis and receive regular updates. An OIHCD representative should accompany photographers on scene.

OIHCD Commissioners should not make any statements to the news media until meeting with the crisis team. It is recommended that any statements made to the news media come only through the designated spokesperson. If incorrect or misstated information is released, the legal consequences could be severe. It's the spokesperson's responsibility to ensure outgoing information is as accurate as possible.

VII. MEASURING SUCCESS

The OIHCD will measure the success of our communication efforts through:

1. **A Community OIHCD Satisfaction Survey** – determine residents' trust of information received, how effectively OIHCD communications raise awareness of what the district is doing, how effectively OIHCD enables community members to provide input and how effectively does the OIHCD help inform community members of the programs and services that are available.
2. **Focus groups** – target messaging to specific groups that might be under-served and gather feedback from them.
3. **Continuous assessment** – solicit ongoing feedback from community members provided on our website and at Town Hall meetings.

4. **Other** – ensure standardized metrics that can compare UW Medicine and OFHC patient satisfaction and patient outcomes and conveying that data to the members of our community.

VIII. SUMMARY

The Communication Policy is developed by the Communications Committee and owned by the Board of Commissioners. To ensure continued relevance and success, the Communications Committee will be asked to review and update the Policy annually, using measurable objectives and tools to evaluate outcomes in order to assess effectiveness.

APPENDIX A 2019 COMMUNICATION TOPICS

On an ongoing basis, the OIHCD will gather insights and information to develop topics for communication efforts. Each topic will be assessed to determine appropriate timing and communication channel. The Communications Committee will maintain an ongoing list and establish ways for the community to see and submit topics.

As of January 2019, the current list includes:

- **Immunizations and Vaccinations**
 - **What is the scope at each clinic for adults vs. children**
- **OIHCD Budget Process**
- **OIHCD Millage Rate calculation**
- **Patient Satisfaction**
 - **What to do when you have an issue**
 - **How to provide feedback to the District**
- **Clinical Support Agreement Basics**
- **Insurance and Providers**
 - **eHealth**
 - **Telehealth**
 - **Charity Care**
 - **Referrals to specialist and eConsult options**
 - **Medical Transportation**
- **Primary, Urgent and Emergency care**
 - **After-Hours Care**
 - **Coordination with EMS**