

Checklist

Skills for Communication Competency 1: Educate

Ask open-ended questions

They help you:

- encourage people to respond more thoroughly
- gather information
- identify what the other person already knows
- understand the other person's perspective
- recognize cultural differences

Examples:

Tell me about ____.

What do you think about ____?

What is your plan for ____?

Please help me understand why you think ____.

Emphasize prevention

- Explain why an action will help avoid injury or illness.
- Use examples of prevention to persuade clients to take proper action.
- This approach can be educational as well as persuasive.

Find teachable moments

- Take note of situations or events in the news or the community that have environmental public health significance.
- Consider those situations to be opportunities to educate people while their interest is already aroused.

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Skills for Communication Competency 2: Communicate

Provide simple, accurate information

- Use plain language that your audience will understand.
- Think about what kinds of information your audience most needs to know.
- Break down the recommended action into no more than three easy steps.

Breaking information into a few brief, simple messages will help your listener understand and remember what you are trying to communicate.

Know your audience

- Don't be shy about asking your clients how much they already know.
- Ask: Do they care? If your message is a low priority for them, you may have to build their interest first.
- Acknowledge client attitudes and concerns. If you expect them to feel resistant, you'll want to anticipate their objections and prepare your responses.

Learn about your audience, so you can respect their current knowledge and attitudes when you plan educational messages for them.

Avoid jargon

- Avoiding using technical or scientific words related to your work
- When you must use technical words, explain them in simple language
- Avoid using acronyms when working with clients

Be culturally competent when communicating

- Think cross culturally. Don't make assumptions or generalizations about what people think or need.
- Listen and observe.
- Communicate clearly.
- Interact with the individual or group you are communicating with.
- Target educational messages to specific groups.

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Skills for Communication Competency 3: Conflict Resolution

- Determine whether conflict resolution is possible.

Conflict resolution is most difficult when:

- You lack authority or the ability to bargain over a certain issue
- You or the other person have no room for flexibility or compromise
- You have a personal tie to the individual with whom you are having the conflict
- You are not able to communicate with the other person because of language or cultural differences

When you anticipate that conflict resolution will be particularly difficult, seek assistance from a facilitator (perhaps a supervisor), mediator, or arbitrator.

- Analyze the situation

- Listen actively
 - Be quiet
 - Remove barriers to effective conversations.
 - Focus your attention on the other person
 - Be aware of your own emotions
 - Confirm your understanding by repeating, paraphrasing, or reflecting
- Reconsider the conflict from different perspectives (reframe)
- Identify the core problem and the underlying reasons for the conflict

- Determine an approach

- Find common ground and identify non-negotiable areas.
- Recommend solutions

- Negotiate resolution

- Obtain resources for help.
- Agree on a plan and on how you will check later to ensure resolution.

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Skills for Communication Competency 4: Marketing Environmental Public Health

When talking to the public:

- Emphasize the value of environmental public health.

- Describe the benefits of what you do rather than the details of what you do.

- Incorporate stories or anecdotes that describe how environmental health makes a difference.

- Gather feedback from the public about their needs regarding environmental health issues, so you give messages that are relevant to them.

- Be consistent. Agree with your colleagues on messages you will share with the public and use them repeatedly.

- Use other good communication skills
 - Avoid jargon.
 - Teach prevention.
 - Be culturally competent.
 - Know your audience.
 - Use teachable moments.
 - Provide simple, accurate information.
 - Break messages or recommendations into just a few easy steps.