



## Best Practices – Issuing Statements on Service Delivery Changes During COVID-19

PREPARED BY THE NEW JERSEY COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT FOR MEMBERSHIP AGENCIES

- (1) **Be direct.** People are distilling a lot of information right now. In messaging, be forthright and honest. It's OK to be genuine and say things like "We don't have all the answers right now" or "Candidly, operations are changing day-to-day in this environment."
  - a. **What is** important is to promise your agency will keep community members as up to date as possible.
  - b. **It is helpful** to keep things simple and readable. People are taking in A LOT of information right now – about their own work, about their kids' schools, etc.  
You can break messaging into two simple headers: **what is NOT changing** and **what IS changing**.
  
- (2) **Think of your audience.** We all slip into acronyms easily and quickly – as experts, it helps us do our work efficiently! But some of your community members might not know what a SART is, but they DO know they want someone to talk to and hear them.
  - a. **Helpful tip:** Write a first draft as you would normally. Then, go back and read it imagining you are a person who has a very basic understanding of what your agency does and revise accordingly.
  - b. **If there are specific attributes about your county that would be helpful for folks to know**, you can include that information as well. For example: are there places that are regularly open in your county but currently aren't?
  
- (3) **Work in threes.** It's a good rule of thumb – folks aren't going to be processing much more than three points at a time, ESPECIALLY right now. Think of your messaging in three buckets:
  - a. We are here to help you. How that help happens will change, but we aren't going anywhere.
  - b. Here is what is changing.
  - c. In need of immediate support? Contact us at: [your contact info here]
  
- (4) **Share on social.** You can follow the above principles and distill this information for social media as well.
  - a. **For Facebook**, consider writing a longer, pinned post. Including "UPDATE:" or "BREAKING:" at the start of your post will help it perform better with Facebook's algorithm. Pinning it to the top of your page will allow folks to continuously, quickly access information about your services.
  - b. **For Twitter**, consider a shorter message and then linking to a page on your website with more information.
  - c. **For Instagram**, you can create an image with agency colors/branding, repurpose the Twitter post for your caption, and include the link to more information in your bio.

# SAMPLE MESSAING – SERVICE DELIVERY

[YOUR LOGO HERE]

Contact information at top: your website, the phone number folks should use right now, an email if applicable

Dear [friends / community members / colleagues / allies / etc.],

We all know these are unprecedented times. The widespread impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has caused [AGENCY NAME] to rethink how we can best serve [COUNTY NAME] for the foreseeable future. Please rest assured: **our commitment to serving survivors of [sexual / domestic] violence does not change**. However, the way we provide services will look different.

**Here is what is not changing:** Our crisis hotline is available 24-hours a day at: [PHONE NUMBER (if your program has virtual chat options, please outline how to access them here too.)] If you are in immediate danger, please call 911.

**Here's what will change:** *[options below—use any or all that are applicable]*

Our physical offices are closed until [DATE (or “for the foreseeable future”)].

We will be providing supportive, trained confidential advocates **via phone** at [hospitals / courtrooms / etc., wherever advocates are responding right now]. Survivors can access virtual confidential advocacy by [OUTLINE PROCESS HERE].

Counseling services will still be available via virtual conferencing. [INFORMATION HERE ABOUT HOW TO ACCESS.] All counseling will still be done confidentially. If you need help determining how you can create a quiet, confidential environment in your home or if you have questions regarding your counseling schedule, please email or call: [CONTACT INFO HERE.]

For the time being, we have suspended community outreach events, including: [LIST WELL-KNOWN ITEMS THAT WILL BE MISSED IN YOUR COMMUNITIES HERE.]

We understand that these are uncertain and unsettling times. Please know that we remain committed to providing support and safety to the members of our community. Although the way we do our work is changing rapidly, we promise to keep you informed. We value you and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the community of [COUNTY NAME].

We will keep in touch with updates on our work. If you have any questions, please reach out to [DIRECT CONTACT HERE].

Thank you for your support!

In community,

[Director's name and signature or “Team PROGRAM NAME”]