

Communication System

Directions

The purpose of this activity is to take a step back and critically assess an existing communication system to either recommend changes or develop a new version. Keep in mind that the purpose of this activity is not to solve the issue at hand.

Part 1:

On your own, read the scenario assigned to your team and think about the communication issues that are present.

As a group, take 5-10 minutes to assess the scenario using the *What Does Your System Look Like* section of this handout.

Part 1: Communication Audit

What Does Your System Look Like?

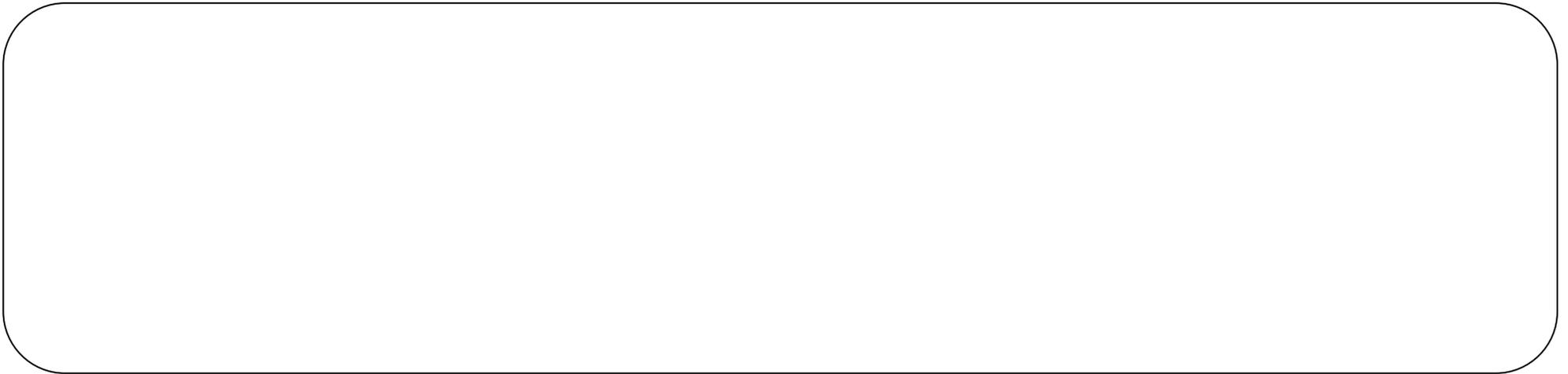


Who?

Who are the senders and who are the receivers?

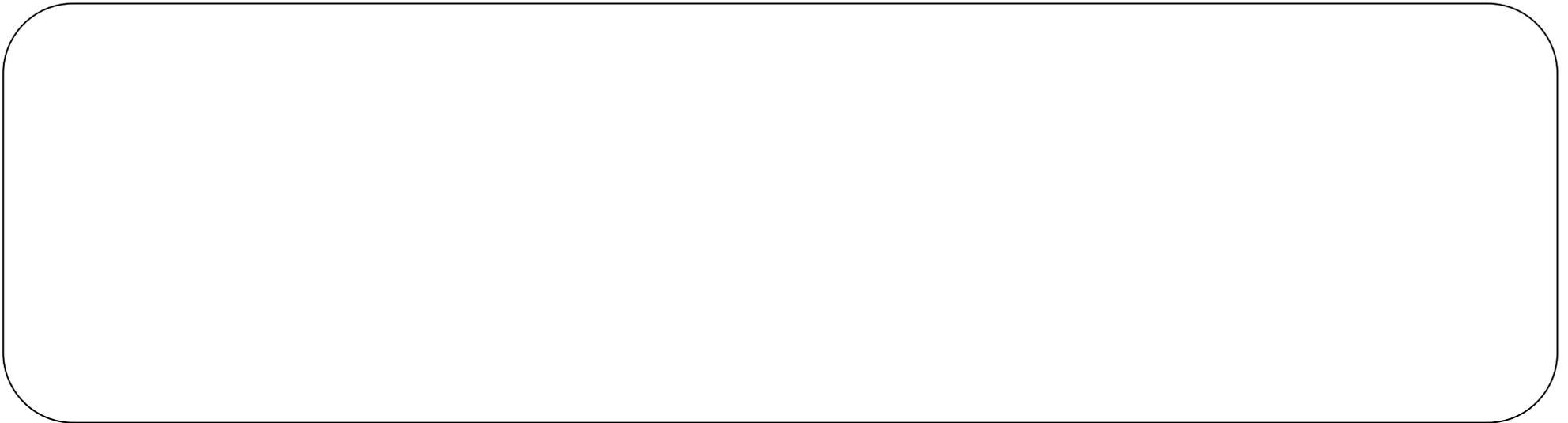
What?

What are the key messages you are sending?



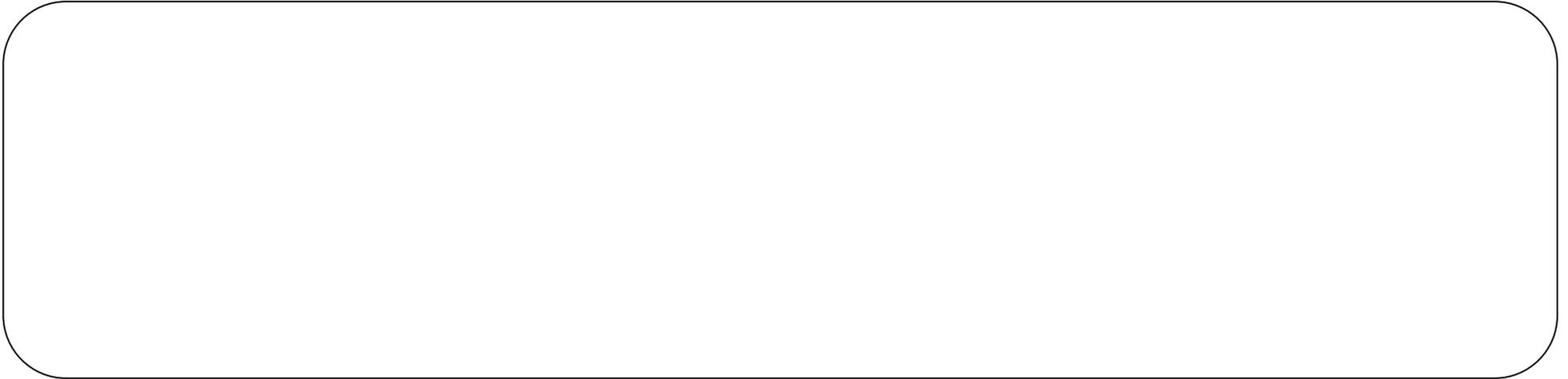
Where?

Where is the communication taking place; e.g., in an intimate setting or a group assembly?



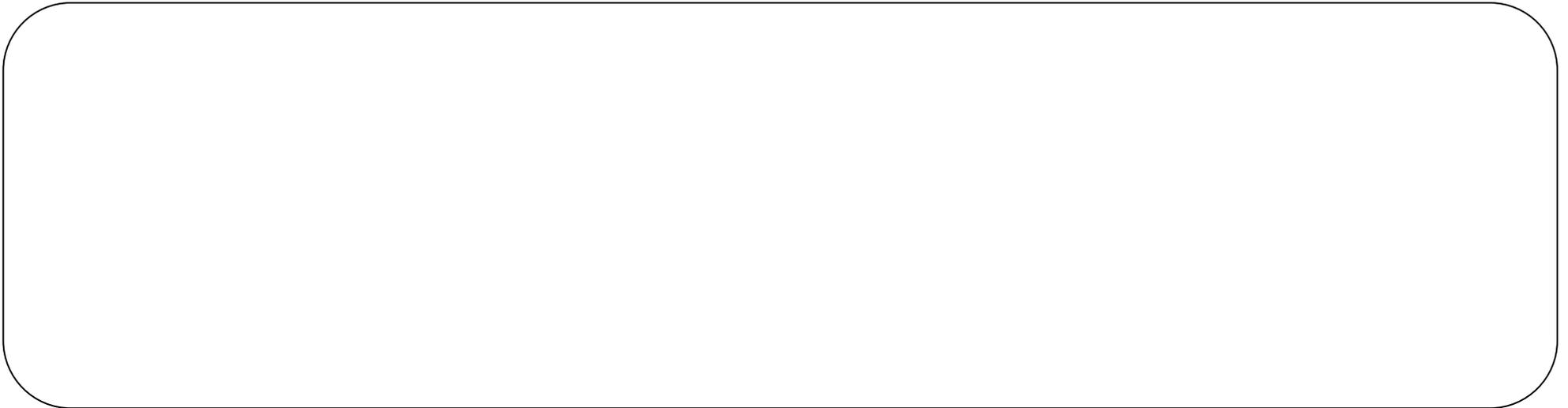
When?

Are these one-time or repeated events? Are they scheduled? Is there a timeline? Or do they happen only when needed?



How?

What modes do you use: verbal, visual, or written? What media do you use: newsletter, memos, texts, emails, etc.?



Part 2: Develop or Revise Your System

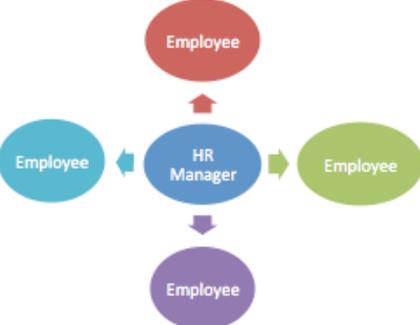
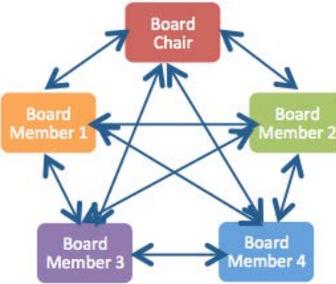
Take 15 minutes to develop your processes and put them in writing by completing the “Communication System” table below.

- a. Establish your key message(s).
- b. Identify the stakeholder(s)/audience.
- c. Choose a mode of communication (*can choose multiple*).
- d. Choose a medium of communication (*can choose multiple*).
- e. Choose a communication flow.
- f. Establish a timeline or occurrence schedule.

Part 3: Evaluate

Use the status-check column (see below) to establish how the communication system will be evaluated.

- g. Establish a status check-in: who, what, when, and how?

| Possible Stakeholders/Audience | Modes of Communication | Media of Communication |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Communication Flow Example: The director develops a directive that is sent to the family services manager, who then distributes it to the family services workers.</p>  <pre> graph LR Director[Director] --> FSM[Family Services Manager] FSM --> FSW1[Family Services Worker] FSM --> FSW2[Family Services Worker] </pre> | <p>Communication Flow Example: The HR manager develops and distributes a newsletter to all employees.</p>  <pre> graph TD HR[HR Manager] --> E1((Employee)) HR --> E2((Employee)) HR --> E3((Employee)) HR --> E4((Employee)) </pre> | <p>Communication Flow Example: Members of the governing body review and vote on the proposed budget for the next year.</p>  <pre> graph TD BC[Board Chair] --> BM1[Board Member 1] BC --> BM2[Board Member 2] BC --> BM3[Board Member 3] BC --> BM4[Board Member 4] BM1 <--> BM2 BM1 <--> BM3 BM1 <--> BM4 BM2 <--> BM3 BM2 <--> BM4 BM3 <--> BM4 </pre> |

Communication System



Scenario: _____

| Key Message | Stakeholder/ Audience | Medium | Communication Flow | Timeline/Occurrence | Status Check |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|
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Communication Scenarios

Scenario 1: Runaway Bus

Louisa, the lead teacher in charge for the afternoon, answers the phone. It is 3:45 pm and a parent is calling, frantic that her child has not arrived home. She explains that her daughter usually gets home between 3:00 and 3:15. Louisa tells the parent that she will try to find out what is going on. The center director had to leave early for a doctor's appointment, and Louisa is not sure of what to do next. She tries calling the bus driver's cell phone but gets no answer. Ten minutes later, another parent calls, stating that when her child did not arrive home, she went driving around looking for the bus. She saw the bus. It appeared to have been in an accident, but the driver would not stop when she tried to wave him down. As it turns out, Louisa gets a call from the local police. They were able to pull the bus over and found that the children were safe, but the driver was disoriented. Louisa then calls the center director.

Scenario 2: Social Media

Gil, the program director, has noticed that teachers are using their phones to take photos of the children and their work. When asked, the teachers explain that they add the photos to the children's portfolios to share with parents. Meanwhile, a parent reports that it is so much fun to see photos of her child at school via their classroom's Facebook page. Gil is concerned that this might not be ethical or legal. He asked the HR director, Anh, for advice. Anh suggests implementing a social media policy. Gil asks Anh to put one together. Anh then presents the new policy via the internal staff newsletter. This creates tension with the education staff, as teachers feel their creativity is being stifled. As a result of some teachers talking about their concerns with the policy to parents, this issue winds up at the top of the agenda for the next Policy Council meeting.

Scenario 3: The Lice Problem

In reviewing attendance reports submitted by delegate agencies, Rodney Small, ERSEA manager and member of the BRSS Head Start management team, has noticed that Bright Stars Child Development Center (eastern division) has had a dramatic drop in consistent attendance in the last month. Since Bright Stars is one of the largest sites, this attendance problem is particularly serious because of under-enrollment and attendance issues with two other delegates.

Rodney contacts the delegate representative and finds out that the center has been experiencing a chronic lice problem and is considering whether it needs to shut down temporarily in order to thoroughly clean the center. Staff members are complaining and reluctant to come to work for fear of getting lice themselves, so staff attendance is suffering. Parents are upset because they are missing work or school as children are being sent home. Rodney is concerned that under-enrollment, already an issue, will increase.

Rodney shares this information with the senior management team. This is the first that Martha Pickler, the Health Manager, has heard of this problem, and she decides she will reach out to the center after the meeting.

Scenario 4: Changing Demographics

Through the community assessment, the April Child Care Center Self-Assessment committee reports that there has been a major increase of Somali refugee families in their community. At the same time, program staff has not seen an increase in enrollment of Somali children. The governing board wants to know why. The director reports that there is currently one teacher from Uganda but none from Somalia. In addition, all recruitment materials and applications are in English. The budget does not include money for translations. The program has always relied on the local Latino center to help with their Spanish-speaking families.

Scenario 5: Reviewing the Budget

Ramon, Maple Leaf Head Start's director, sent out the following email to the governing body members:

Hello,

I am looking forward to meeting with all of you later tonight. We are coming upon the end of the year and I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the attached budget report.

Sincerely,

Ramon

Maple Leaf Head Start 2012/13 Budget

This year's budget is \$11,388,442

Includes:

- \$7,577,456 for personnel costs
- \$823,995 to run the facilities
- \$1,983,008 for overall program operations
- \$1,003,983 for other, miscellaneous expenses

Last year's budget was \$10,506,237

- Personnel costs were \$6,889,013
- Facilities cost \$754,228
- Program operations totaled \$1,983,008
- Other items cost \$879,988

This year's budget is \$882,205 more than last year's.