

## Vermont Language Assistance Services Emergency Communications Working Group Meeting Minutes from 10/11/24

Attendees: Eric Forand, Alison Segar, Jay Barton, Xusana Davis, Joe Tymecki, Mark Bosma, Amber Leventry, Laura, Siegel

VEM working towards an Ops Manual

Which platforms? Press releases, press conferences, social media posts, website, VT Alerts  
Are there others? Whats App? Telegraph?

Who do they go to?

- Amber shared with Mark a list of about 200 email addresses that VTDH sends emergency communications to, but encourages VEM to cultivate their own relationships with different non english speaking communities (ie Open Door, Mosques, coalitions like the Community Equity Collaborative in Brattleboro and VT Business for Social Responsibility. VT Professionals of Color Network).
- Amber also suggests tapping into local health offices and Agency of Education to get them to add VEM messages to their distribution channels.
- VT Dept. of Health has a newsletter (in English) that goes out to community partners quickly
- Xusana wonders if some of these messages can be automated?
- VLJP working on a free app (*Information for You*) that will be a repository of all their videos - expected to be done by February/March.
- Mark asked for members of this working group to vouch for VEM with their contacts as a valid entity
- Eric wondered what's the most efficient way to maintain a list of who as well as how to get emergency communications to the list? An old fashioned "Phone Tree" was discussed. Xusana said she is envisioning a tagging system so we can select which segments of the "big list" are most relevant. Laura wondered how to avoid duplication?
- Xusana asked if VEM/SEOC have liaisons who would do this connecting in real time?
- Laura asked about where to look for the information that already exists in English. Mark said press releases go to the press and anyone else who would like them. The information gets passed through the press and on VEM social media and the VEM website. Alison suggested VEM have a page they can hide when no emergency is happening, but show during an emergency. /flood, /tornado, etc.
- Alison suggested there be a separate position at VEM for updating communications platforms (ie website) in real time.
- Xusana asked if VEM uses an RSS feed? Eric/Mark said no. Laura asked if you can track how many people actually use RSS feeds? Jay said you can embed a code to track.
- Eric explained how during an emergency, Mark leads all the PIOs from other VT state departments in a Joint Information Center (JIC)
- In addition to including in the report that we don't recommend AI Translate, Alison wants to make sure we mention that not everyone reads or writes in their own language.
- Eric asked the group to think about interpreters and other contractors being used and bring suggestions to the working group next week.
- Laura said that the state contract (with Vancro) pays interpreters at a very low rate.

Geographic Areas of Greatest Need:

- Eric suggested we use the survey Amber already did as a base and work from there, but likely after the report is submitted

- Xusana found that when they did focus groups, they used ZOOM and the break out room feature with the interpreters, but it took a long time and doesn't advise it.
- Eric recommends focus groups be held and that we ask the legislature for money for food, etc.

Technology:

- Jay working on two sections for the report:
  - Picture in Picture description section
  - FCC regulations on closed captioning (internet vs TV because it doesn't work the same way)
- Laura said there are captioning services that will translate in other languages (not sure if the one in VT does)
- "Live and Breaking" options for the legislature to consider pertaining to broadcasts (Option A is this and will cost this, Option B is this and will cost this, Option C is this and will cost this).