# Communications

**Communications are a fundamental part of any hotline project, both in terms of awareness-raising and in terms of visibility before the general public and key stakeholder groups. Clarity and consistency of messaging are very important for new and experienced hotlines.**

For the video, please visit http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/guide/communications/

The hotline's overall messaging will depend upon its defined scope and remit as well the nature of its parent organisation. It is important that the hotline's purpose and function is communicated in a way that resonates with all stakeholders.

The messaging should communicate that the hotline:

- Is focused on content that is within their stated remit and is illegal in the country where it operates. Ideally the remit of the hotline will focus on child sexual abuse material and possibly other forms of online child sexual exploitation.
- Has independence and is firmly committed to its defined scope. It is important to be very clear that the hotline will not be involved in removing other types of content that fall outside the strict guidelines of the hotline's operation. This kind of transparency is critical to the hotline's reputation and to ongoing trust in the hotline and its processes
- Is committed to uphold the terms of reporting that are stated clearly on its website. These can relate to anonymity and confidentiality, and will be put in place to confirm that the hotline does not hold data on or take action based on the personal data of people who report content.
- Has the support of government, law enforcement, industry and civil society in its country.
- Is part of and works in partnership with a wider, international effort to combat child sexual abuse material. This can include membership of INHOPE, cooperation with the INHOPE network through the INHOPE Foundation, and cooperation with the wider international community

Established links with international partners can also help to encourage reporting by the public, who may be reluctant to report to their national authorities but have no experience of reporting through other channels. Sharing the experience of countries around the world can help give visibility to the hotline, which in turn can support build operations and increase the numbers of reports to the hotline.

Additional messages on the hotline’s website can be more detailed, but the aim must always be to make the hotline’s operations and objectives as clear as possible. Information to include on the hotline’s website should include:

- What happens when a report is made? (NTD, INHOPE database, Interpol, etc).
- Does the reporter have the right to be told the outcome of the findings?
- Can reports be made anonymously?
- Who is involved in the decision-making process and what are the escalation processes if there is no clear answer?
- What is the governance structure? Who holds the hotline accountable?
- How is the hotline funded?

The hotline should also build up a directory with information that redirects people who are reporting issues that fall outside of the hotline’s remit. This could include issues such as online fraud, but it could also include reports concerns about specific children at risk of abuse in real-time.

In some cases, the hotline’s parent organisation will have a remit that includes attention to child victims of violence, exploitation and abuse. IN this case, the relevant internal protocols can be established. However, it is important to maintain a clear separation between the role of the hotline and the role of other parts of the organisation. This will help to ensure that urgent reports are handled quickly.

Redirecting the public to other organisations will help the hotline to manage its workload and remain focused on its mission and remit in relation to child sexual abuse material.

In a similar way, encourage relevant official bodies, NGOs, industry partners and so on, to use their websites to direct people wishing to report illegal online content to the hotline website.

## Awareness-raising

Awareness-raising campaigns will be critical at launch, but will also be an ongoing part of hotline operations. This will include generating national press coverage, as well as working in more targeted ways. For example, trying to reach out to corporate IT managers through industry press or training programmes.

Public awareness can be dramatically increased by press coverage, in particular at the time of launching the hotline. Also use the Internet and the promotional power of your partners.

### Launch Event

Organise a launch event or conference with speakers from the different stakeholder groups. This will give visibility to the multi-stakeholder nature of the hotline project, and will help to generate media coverage.

For the formal launch of the hotline, have the following in place:

- Headline messaging that has been agreed by all key stakeholders
- Press release with quotes from key stakeholders and opinion formers, for example: a minister, a law enforcement officer, NGOs and industry. The aim is to show collaboration and support, so that people will feel comfortable reporting.
- Establish links to the hotline website from the state / government website, the relevant law enforcement website, and as many industry partners as possible

Think creatively about how to work with your partners to promote the hotline service. For example:

- Mobile operator partners may have subscribers who accept promotional SMS messages
- Internet service providers may provide free advertising for the hotline on their platforms and can provide support for online, radio or TV campaigns
- The website of the national law enforcement agency could promote the hotline as an authorized and trustworthy means to report illegal content.
- Stakeholders could be encouraged to talk about their relationship with the hotline when engaging with the media and the public.

### Starting out

Even with a strong focus on communications at the start, the hotline will spend at least the first year of operations getting the message out.

To further this process, it is important to:

- Seek out and accept opportunities to present about the hotline and its activities at conferences and event.
- Communicate about success stories. For example, a report sent by the hotline to law enforcement or sent through INHOPE channels may result in the rescue of children and the arrest of their abusers in another country. This sends a powerful and important message to all stakeholder regarding the nature of child sexual abuse material. Behind every image and video is real child being abused. Behind and beyond the role that hotlines play in the Notice and Takedown of URLs, their actions contribute directly to the potential rescue of a child somewhere in the world.
- Learn from other hotlines that have developed a range of means to encourage reporting

## Tips from ~~ECPAT Sweden(http://www.ecpat.se/in-english)~~ on promoting the hotline

- Use your statistics. Meet face-to-face with journalists and explain how you work and what the numbers are saying.
- Build a presence in social media. Communicate about current news relating to CSAM.
- Establish partnerships with the IT/telecom industry that are of mutual benefit. This creates opportunities such as joint op-eds, being guests at each others seminars, etc.
- Communicate the hotline's existence and function by increasing public awareness. You want people to know that there is a national hotline to which they can turn if they stumble upon something that may be illegal and within the hotline's mandate. At the same time, the hotline does not exist to encourage people to "support our effort". We certainly do not want people going online to search for CSAM in order to report it. This balance should always be considered when informing people about the availability to report potentially illegal content.
- Use correct and verified statistics and proper terminology in order to establish the hotline as a credible "go-to" source. Don't give in to media, partners or other parties trying to get estimates or figures where there are none to be had.
- Take time to identify your correct "hotline" target audience, then communicate accordingly. As with all communication, the more specific this is, the easier it is to reach them.
- Then consider how best to get through to the selected target audience. The language, platform and message can always be optimised for maximum impact.