You have a critical role in helping to prevent and control the spread of avian influenza in your community. Here are some suggestions to help you communicate effectively with families about how they can reduce the risk that avian influenza will take hold in their community.

**DURING A VISIT**

1. **First build confidence and trust.** Be polite. Use phrases like, “I know how you feel” or “I understand.” Sit on the same level that the family is sitting.
2. **Tell people about control efforts.** Keep explanations simple. Do not provide too much technical information, but be clear about the actions they can take to protect themselves from avian influenza, and why everyone needs to participate.
3. **Leave behind leaflets** (if you have them) for family members to read, even if they cannot read. The act of leaving something will remind them after you have gone. School-aged children in the family also may be able to relay the information.
4. **Ask for their participation and support.** Reiterate that they can help protect the whole community. Thank the family for their cooperation and time.

**ALWAYS**

- **Be reassuring** – People may be frightened and confused. Be patient.
- **Listen carefully** – Listen more than you talk, and respond sympathetically to their concerns.
- **Motivate** – Tell them people’s actions are key to controlling the spread of influenza.
- **Reinforce messages** – People can protect themselves, their families and neighbors by taking action.
- **Be honest** – If you do not know the answer to a question, tell people you will return or contact them later with a correct answer.

**NEVER**

- Get angry or act impatient.
- Use phrases such as “You are wrong,” or “that is ignorant.”
- Blame the family.
- Shake your head when they are expressing an opinion.
- Answer questions when you do not know the answer.
- Threaten the family.
- Act arrogant or insult the family.
- Take notes – it can create anxiety.

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1 Adapted from UNICEF/Turkey “Communicating about bird flu to families: A guide for Muhtars, midwives, and others that work in the community”
TALKING POINTS TO USE WHEN COMMUNICATING TO FAMILIES ABOUT AVIAN INFLUENZA

- As in other countries, avian influenza is now a problem in our country.
- Any person who comes into close contact with sick or dead birds is at risk for avian influenza. You usually cannot tell if a bird is sick from avian flu or from another disease, so you should always take precautions. Some birds, such as ducks, may not show symptoms at all.
- So far, avian influenza does not seem to transmit easily from person to person.
- Droppings, blood, saliva, and nose secretions of infected birds and poultry can carry the virus, and the virus can survive for many hours on surfaces (and for many days in the environment). Boiling hot water, soap and detergents can kill the virus.
- Everyone must participate to protect each other from the spread of this disease.

FIVE ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING AVIAN INFLUENZA FROM BIRDS:

1. **Avoid close contact with all birds**
   - Keep your children away from all birds and from collecting eggs, if possible.
   - Do not allow poultry in your house. If poultry must be kept indoors, keep them in a specific area that is away from where the family sleeps and eats.

2. **Do not touch sick or dead birds – report them to the authorities immediately**
   - If you come across any dead or sick birds, do not touch them unless you are wearing gloves.
   - Do not slaughter or prepare sick or dead poultry for food.
   - If you develop fever 3 to 7 days after being in contact with sick or dead poultry, seek immediate health care treatment.

3. **Practice good hygiene**
   - Wash your hands with soap and water or ash before and after handling any poultry – and especially before and after you prepare poultry or eggs for eating.
   - Wear gloves and a mask (or towel/cloth/handkerchief) over your mouth when cleaning or sweeping any area where poultry are kept – poultry droppings, feed and feathers can all be infected with the avian influenza virus.

4. **Cook chicken and eggs thoroughly before eating.**
   - Do not eat runny eggs or poultry meat (or blood) that is not well-cooked.
   - Wash your hands with soap and water or ash before and after preparing poultry or eggs for eating.

5. **Be careful if you go to farms, markets, or other areas where poultry are kept.**
   - Wash hands with ash or soap and water before entering and after leaving an area where poultry are kept.
   - Brush off and disinfect clothing, shoes-sandals, and the wheels of bikes/motorcycles/other vehicles after leaving, and especially before going indoors, to remove any droppings or dust.

Prepared by AED