

Getting Ahead Of & Combatting Misinformation Strategies for Effective Management

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Purpose of Today's Webinar

Review and discuss:

- Risks posed by misinformation in today's digital world
- Strategies to combat misinformation effectively
- Tools that will equip local government leaders the ability to regain control of their message and maintain public trust

Key Definitions

Misinformation

Disinformation

Malinformation

FIGURE C Global risks ranked by severity over the short and long term

"Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period."

Risk categories

- Economic
- Environmental
- Geopolitical
- Societal
- Technological

2 years



10 years



Source

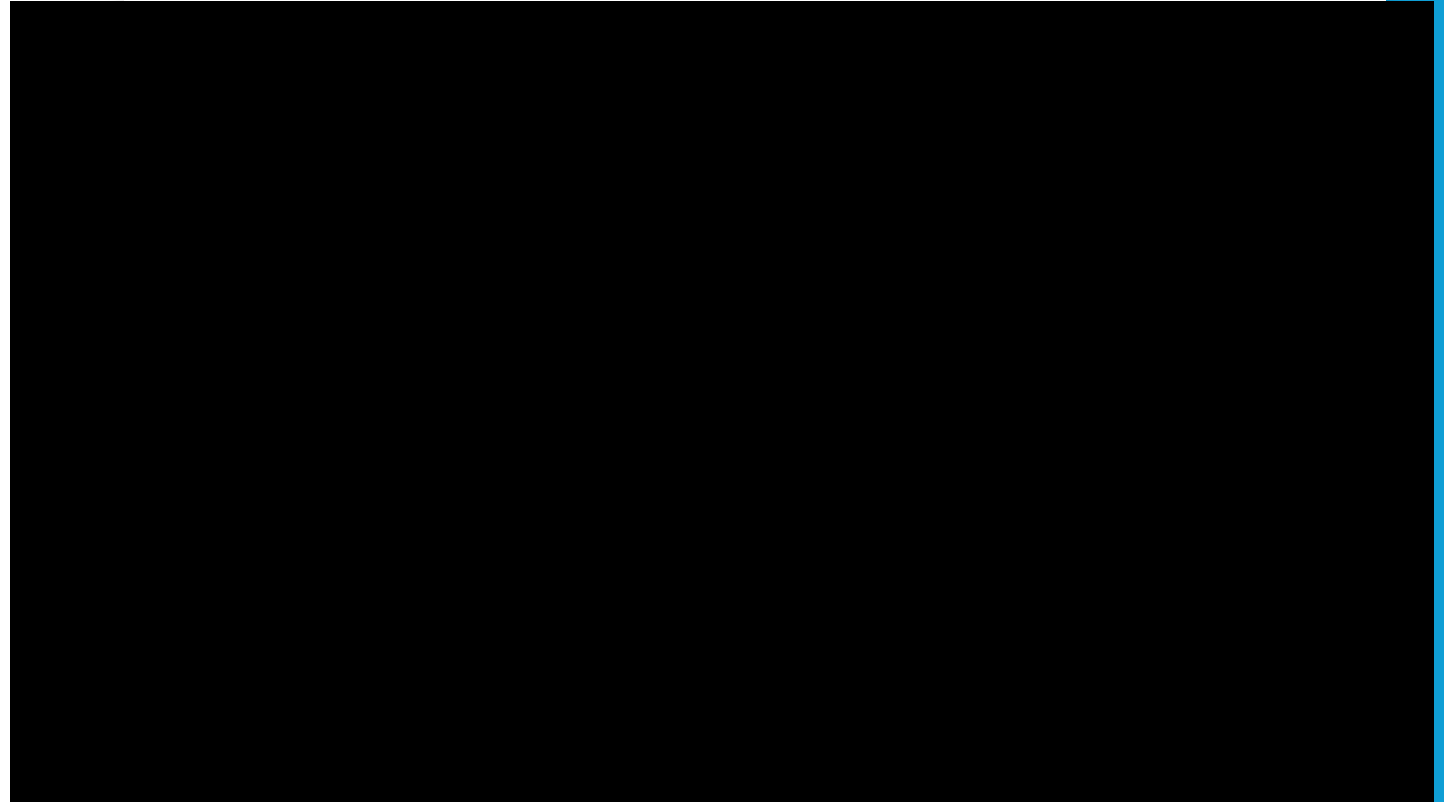
World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024.

Growing Threats

- Role of social media and algorithm-driven content
- AI amplifying manipulated and distorted information
- Impacts on local governance, safety, public health, political stability



Deep Fake of Public Figures





Key Indicators of Misinformati on

- Emotional Manipulation
- Lack of Credible Sources
- Sensationalized Headlines
- Contradictions

**Yesterday a friend
was stopped &
fingerprinted by ICE
in Harvard Square
because he "looks
like an immigrant".
He's Native American**



Like



Share



Ed Solenberger

July 21, 2018 · 🌐



Show Attachment



9

3 Comments 1 Share



Like



Share



Melanie Black

Any proof this is true?



2

Like · 3y



Ed Solenberger

I really don't know.

Like · 3y



Ed Solenberger

Sorry

Like · 3y



Steve Delfino

"Also, can't help but notice they didn't feel the need to stop French-speaking tourists walking by."

4d Like



38



Paul Buckus

This person should contact the ACLU. Good example for a class action suit

4d Like



28



Mike Douglas

This would be hilarious if it wasn't so frightening



2



4



Subject: ICE fingerprinting in Harvard Sq--7News Request

Hi Jeremy,

We got a couple tips about ICE officers patrolling Harvard Sq yesterday- one of our colleagues reported that she herself was fingerprinted by someone who appeared to be ICE to check her immigration status. More and more this sounds like these were fake officers. Do you have any reports on this?

Look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

Brian Michael

Assignment Editor

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617-725-0775





Lowell Police Department (Official)

18m · 🌐



The Lowell Police Department has become aware of a viral social media post alleging that federal authorities are actively seeking a motor vehicle containing 2-3 males wanted for sexual assaults in the Bridge St. area of Lowell. We are constantly working and in contact with our federal law enforcement partners and can confirm that there is no truth to this post.

LPD5

Advisory Regarding Viral Social Media Post

The Lowell Police Department has become aware of a viral social media post alleging that federal authorities are actively seeking a motor vehicle containing 2-3 males wanted for sexual assaults in the Bridge St. area of Lowell. We are constantly working and in contact with our federal law enforcement partners and can confirm that there is no truth to this post.





Town of Norfolk's Temporary Emergency Shelter

Managing Misinformation
in a Small Town

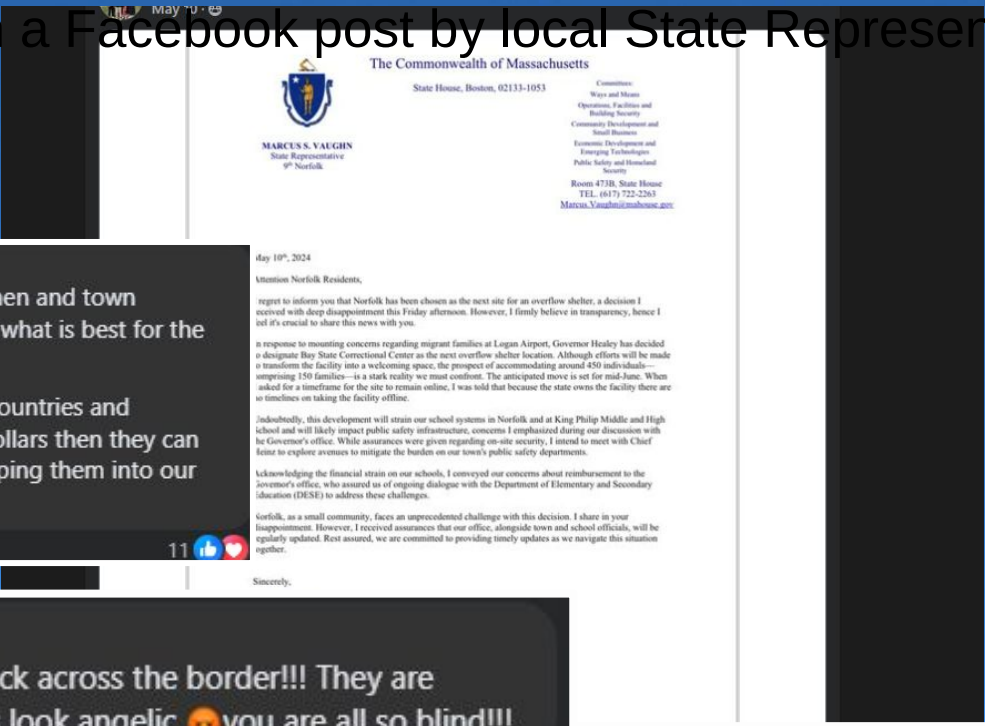
- The Public Forum
- Community Facebook Page
- Influence of Outside Actors



On Friday, May 10, the Town found out the decommissioned Bay State Correctional Center had been designated as a temporary emergency shelter by the Healey Administration.

The Town was told that:

- 140 families or up to 405 people deemed eligible for emergency assistance. Some families are currently housed at Logan Airport
- The shelter is planned to be in operation for six to twelve months
- We found out... through a Facebook post by local State Representative



James George
 This is an absolute disgrace, and the fact that our board of selectmen and town administrator would allow this shows that they have no interest in what is best for the town of Norfolk or it people.
 If the government wants to take in illegal immigrants from other countries and overwhelm our communities while paying for them with our tax dollars then they can find a spot in Washington DC to house all of them instead of dumping them into our backyards!

Patti McDermott McLaughlin
 Wake Up People if you think it's all needy that snuck across the border!!! They are murderers! Criminals! Gangs, that make our gangs look angelic you are all so blind!!!

Todd LaBagh
 Hundreds of billions of dollars just given away to corrupt countries. What do we get? Illegal immigrants taking our benefits.....thank a demorat!!!!!!

provided by the Governor and her team regarding the d

By Monday...

People wanted answers

- Norfolk Community Facebook page
 - 50% - Concern and/or outrage
 - 50% - Let's wait to see impact. What can we do to help?
- Press requests
 - Local, Statewide, National, Global
 - Washington Post, Swedish Documentary
- Voicemail inboxes full
 - A few were valid questions/concerns regarding the situation
 - Some were offers of assistance and volunteers
 - A lot were explicit, hateful comments about staff, Select Board members, the migrants, political figures, MA Governor etc.
 - The rest were a result of being in national headlines



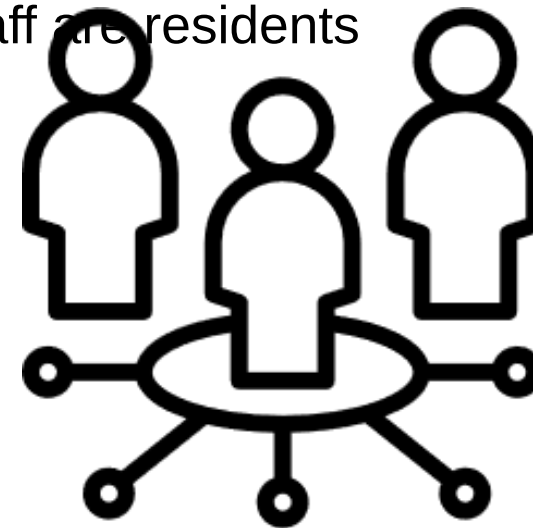
About Norfolk



- Suburban town located in Norfolk County, approximately 30 minutes southwest of Boston
- Population: 11,594
- Select Board (3 members) – Town Meeting – Town Administrator
- MBTA station, rural feel
- 2 Elementary Schools (close to capacity) & King Phillip Regional School – High and Middle
- A lot of staff are residents

Small Town Structure

- As ATA/HR Director, I wear many hats
 - I also serve as Communications Director
 - Executive Assistant in the Select Board's office
- All Town communications go through SB office
- PR Firm for press releases



Communication Strategy: One message from centralized source, then rely on help

- **Two Channels:**
 - Town Facebook page – only for pushing out info, no comments
 - Town Website – News posts and e-notify alerts
- **Set up a Shelter Dashboard on the website**
 - Centralized location for any all information regarding the shelter
 - If not on dashboard, it's not official
 - Worked w/schools = one message
- **Help from trusted and informed community partners**
 - Town staff who are residents, other board members
 - Civic and community groups
 - Share Town message online
 - correct misinformation in real time
 - Helped Town Admin and policy leader stay out of fray

Temporary Emergency Shelter Dashboard

The Select Board and Town staff are committed to transparency and regular updates to the community as we work through this transition. All updates posted to this page are official updates from the Town of Norfolk. [Sign up to get notifications of page updates here.](#)

Overview:

The Town was informed on Friday, May 10th, that the decommissioned Bay State Correctional Center had been designated as a temporary emergency shelter by the Healey Administration. This decision was made as part of its ongoing response to the number of migrant families arriving in Massachusetts. The Town had no role in this decision and was not consulted prior.

The Town was told that:

- The shelter will be managed 24/7 by a shelter operator determined through a competitive bid by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.
- The shelter will house up to 140 families or up to 405 people deemed eligible for emergency assistance.
- Some families are currently housed at Logan Airport.
- The shelter is planned to be in operation for six to twelve months.
- [Headline Home](#) has been selected as the Bay State service provider.

Local Response:

An unexpected influx of a large number of families poses many logistical challenges to Norfolk. Town Administrator Justin Casanova-Davis, Police Chief Timothy Heinz, Fire Chief Errol Kinney, Norfolk School Superintendent Ingrid Allardi, King Philip Superintendent Rich Drolet, and other department leaders will meet regularly in the coming days and weeks. This group, along with the Select Board, will develop a comprehensive list of potential impacts to the Town and develop strategies to continue to deliver regular municipal services without interruption. We also will have regular conversations with state officials to ensure the Town's concerns are heard, and to work collaboratively on creative solutions that are in the best interests of Norfolk.

What's Next?

The State held a meeting for parents focused on education on July 11, 2024. Click [here](#) to view the video. Additional details will be posted on this webpage and the Town's [Facebook page](#).

Any further updates will be posted on this page or the respective sub-links. Please get in touch with Town Administrator Justin Casanova-Davis at casanovadavis@norfolk.ma.us or the [Select Board](#) if you have any questions.



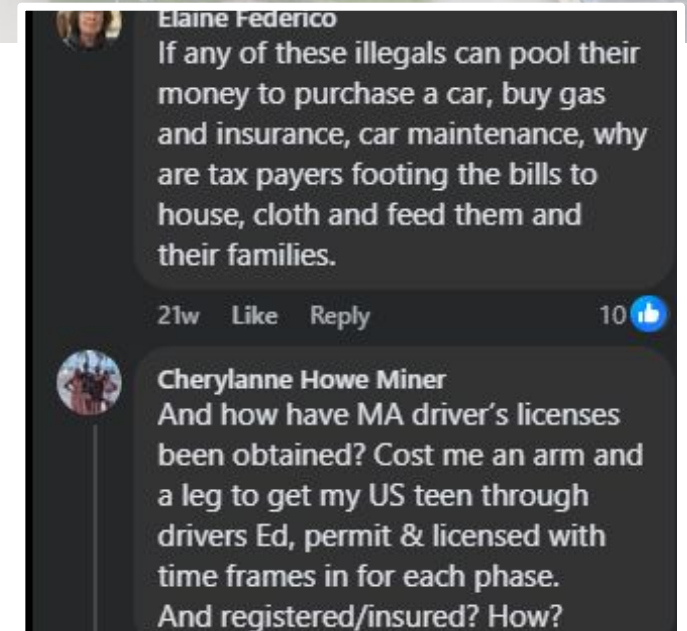
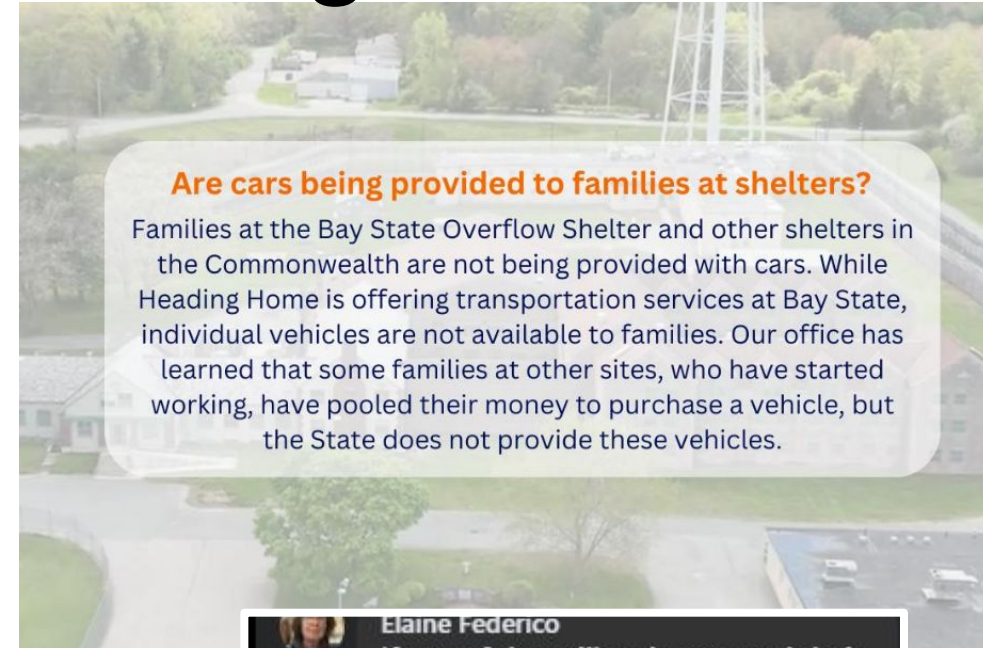
The Public Forum



- **Example of misinformation/Disinformation/Malinformation**
 - In theory, great idea but this event inflamed the situation for the Town and increased lack of trust from residents
 - Anger towards the State because of their lack of information
 - Scheduled during a time where the State did not know a lot of facts or were not able to communicate them
- **Emotions were raised and questions/comments sometimes came from valid concerns and fear regarding the economic/political landscape**

Norfolk's Community Facebook Page

- **A friend and foe for misinformation**
 - Not run by the Town, but has responsible page admins
 - Page admins would correct misinformation & shut down post if out of control
 - it's hard to correct w/ such low public trust
 - Several other Facebook pages developed from the community page posts – pro/con shelter
- **Facebook post on July 12 – Migrants are being given cars by the state**
 - Rumor grew throughout the day and resulted in many calls to the Town, elected officials, and local press
 - “My taxes are paying for them to have cars” “I can’t even afford a car”
 - Ended up putting out a press release to address the rumor



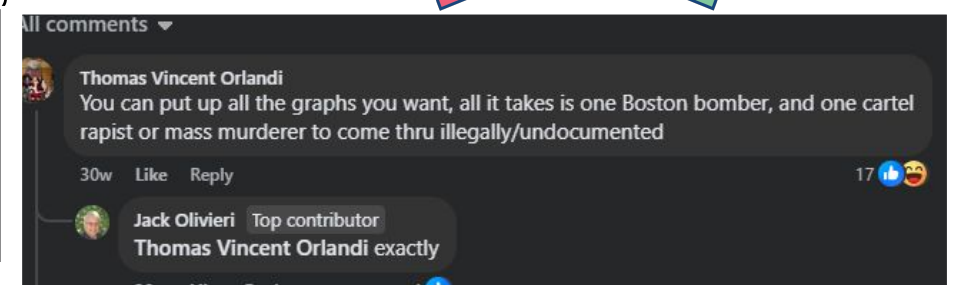
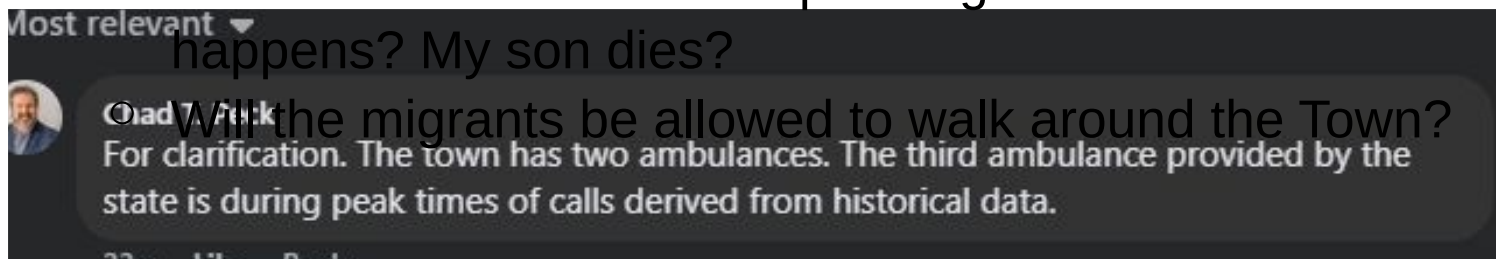
Norfolk's Community Facebook Page

- **Public Safety and Schools**

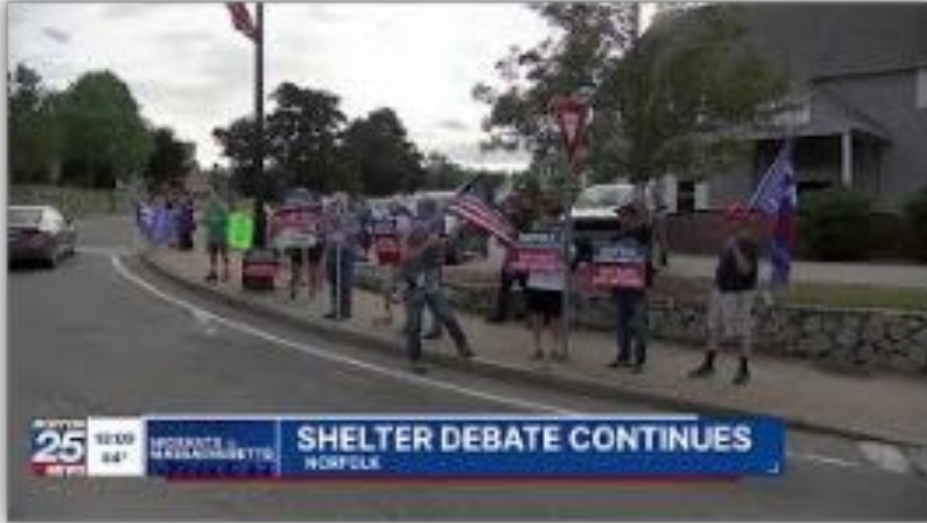
- Two biggest issues for the Town was the potential impact on schools and public safety
- Small Town with limited resources, not much commercial revenue, and two schools already at capacity. All valid concerns.

- **Communication challenge: misinformation that hits people where it hurts the most – their kids and safety**

- None of those kids will be vaccinated in time for school
- Once they are here they have the right to go to school here even if they move
- What will happen to my kids IEP?
- If my allergic son gets stung by a bee and the Town's only available ambulance is responding to a call at the shelter, what



Outside Groups

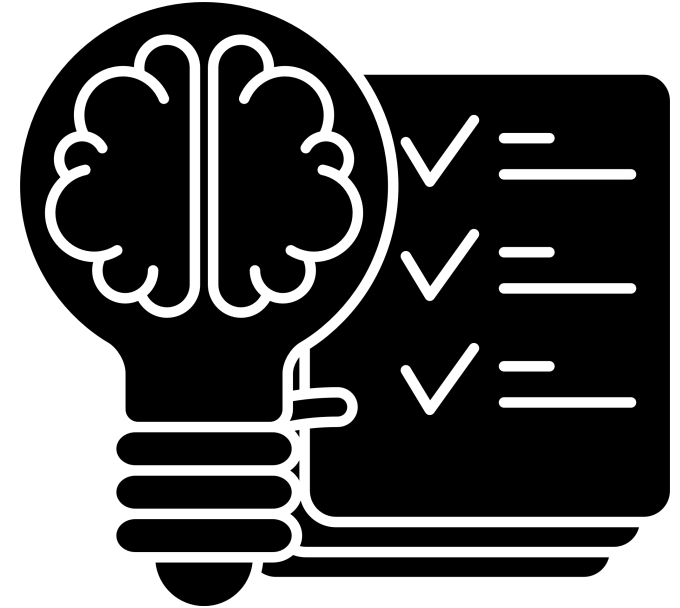


- With the attention from the national headlines, Norfolk attracted many “outsiders” who used fear and sensational misinformation to cause chaos
- Outside political groups (throughout New England) sent members to the public forum and local protests
 - Not directly impacted by this, planted to push own agenda
 - Were the loudest, heckled speakers and residents
- Easy to take advantage in a low trust environment



Lessons Learned

- **Centralized message**
 - Online dashboard
 - Collaboration with schools = one message
- **Utilized our community structure**
 - Staff, local leaders, civic groups corrected misinformation
- **Reach out to your neighboring communities**
 - How did they handle communications?
- **Don't tell someone else's story**
 - The State had a story to tell, not the Town
 - Direct questions to the organization who owns the story
- **Keep staff informed along the way**
 - They will be your biggest advocates





Cambridge's Temporary Emergency Shelter

- Hosted approximately 70-80 families
- Shelter was located at state-owned Registry of Deeds building
- Multiple rumors over the first month

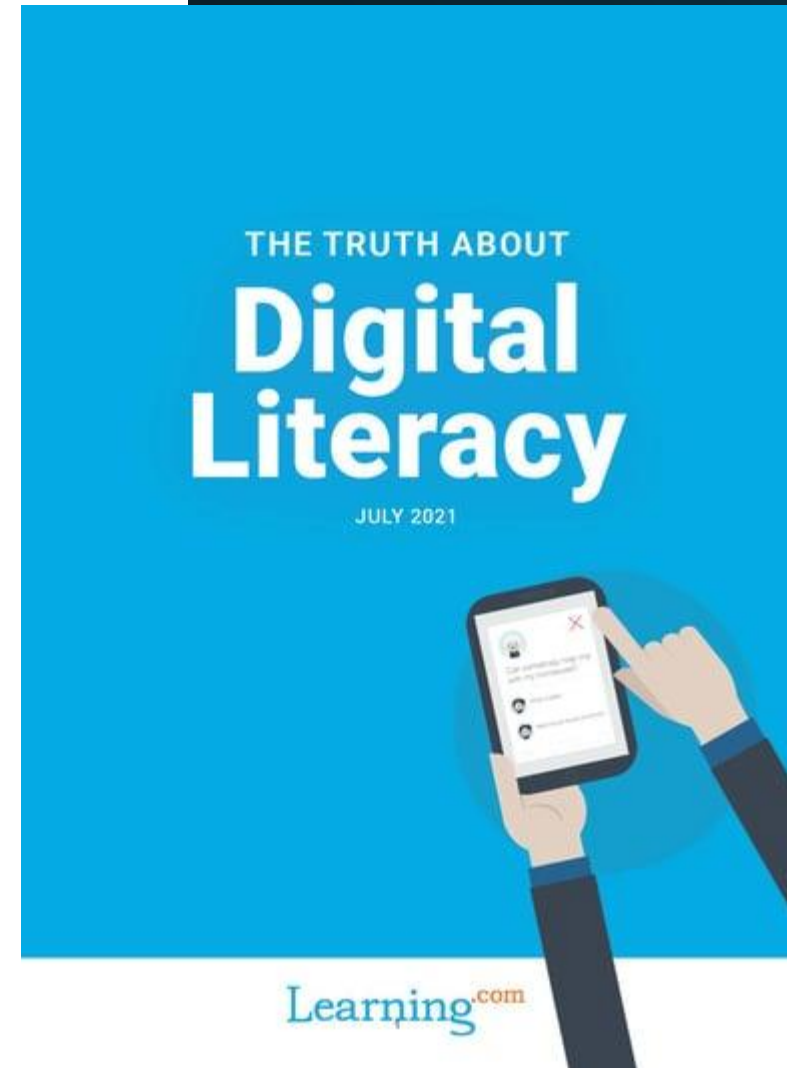


Strategies to Control the Spread

- Steadfast Monitoring
- Act Quickly
- Set Thresholds
- Demonstrated Empathetic Transparency and Relentless Follow-Up
- Be Coordinated and Consistent
- Leverage Influencers and Local Leaders

Establish Educational Frameworks

- Launch Information literacy campaigns
- Promote hubs for digital literacy workshops
- Create awareness around detection tools



Actionable Steps for Leaders

- Establish a crisis communications plan
- Monitor key topics
- Build partnerships with fact-checkers
- Invest in public awareness
- Train employees and communications teams
- Establish policies so employees can engage and respond responsibly



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