

SECTION: Outreach**SUBJECT: Use of Text Messaging and Social Media in WIC local agencies**

Federal Regulations:**Background**

The Webster¹ definition of **text messaging**, or **texting**, is a short message that is sent electronically to a cell phone or other device. The term originally referred to messages sent using the [Short Message Service](#) (SMS); it has grown to include messages containing image, video, and sound content (known as [MMS](#) messages). Text messaging in the health care and more specifically in the WIC Program is becoming increasingly popular as more people have access to cell phones with texting plans and prefer the use text messaging for its convenience.

While advances in technology can improve provision of WIC Nutrition Services, the nature of texting and the ability to have content of texted information saved on mobile devices indefinitely can pose risks to client confidentiality including theft, loss and/or viewing of the confidential information by unauthorized persons.

Policy**Text Messaging**

Through the statewide appointment reminder system, One Call, the State agency authorizes the use of text messages for WIC appointment reminders, contacting participants about missed appointments and/or reminders for expiring benefits. **Use of text messaging for nutrition education is not authorized at this time.** For use of texting applications in the WIC Peer Counseling Program, please refer to the program protocols.

If participants provide us with a cell phone number, and they are automatically, added to the texting protocol. They have the option of opting out, at any time. (See opt-in message on next page.) Participants will be able to receive appointment reminders via text messages. Participants who have provided phone numbers for landlines will continue to receive voice message reminders. At this time messages can be received in English and Spanish only.

¹ Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. *Text messaging*. Retrieved February 21, 2017, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/text%20messaging>

Opt in Message for One Call:

Great News!

*We will start sending you text messages for your WIC appointment reminders. If you do **NOT** want to get text messages for WIC text the word **STOP** to **22300** from your cell phone now.*

If you change phone number, do it again from your new phone. Remember, messages sent to you count toward your text plan. Thank you

iBuenas Noticias!

*Nosotros comenzaremos a enviarle mensajes de textos recordándoles sus citas. Si usted **NO** desea recibir estos mensajes de textos de WIC escriba la palabra **STOP** al **22300** desde su celular ahora.*

Si cambia los números de teléfono, hágalo otra vez desde su nuevo teléfono. Recuerde, los mensajes que usted reciba se deducirán de su plan de textos.

Guidance on Use of Social Media and WIC

Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest are popular communication mediums for society, in particular, the millennial generation. While these new communication methods can enhance personal and professional communications, staff must follow WIC Program policies and procedures, in particular WIC confidentiality requirements, when communicating with participants and other allied health professionals. Staff are responsible for any content they e-mail, text, or post to social media sites. It is the Program Coordinators' responsibility to be aware of staff's online activity and/or electronic communications to program appropriate guidance and oversight. The State agency requires that local agency management staff monitor all staff social media activities to ensure appropriate documentation and that participant confidentiality is protected.

If a local agency is interested in using social media to outreach or enhance WIC nutrition education for participants a plan should be developed and submitted to the State agency for review and approval.

When developing a plan use the following process:

Begin by researching your sponsoring agency's guidance and policy on social media.

Consider your overall local agency communication plan and your objectives. Determine the local agency's outcome for using social media and if it is in line with the local agency's overall plan and objectives. Would traditional communication methods suffice? Consider available staff resources to develop, monitor and update a social media site.

If there is a need for using social media, determine which type would best help your agency meet the targeted outcome and how participants would benefit.

For example, if interested in a local agency Facebook page, do research on successful sites for women, breastfeeding, nutrition and or other topics relevant to the WIC community to determine what new information your proposed site would provide, what gaps need filling, and/or are current sites sufficient?

Additional References

NYS DOH WIC Program. (2011). *Toolkit: Building the Framework for a Sustainable Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program*. Albany, NY: NYS DOH WIC Program.

Terry, K. (2012, October 31). Text Messaging Between Clinicians Increasing in Hospitals . *Information Week* .
<http://www.informationweek.com/mobile/text-messaging-between-clinicians-increasing-in-hospitals/d/d-id/1107145>

Resources and Toolkits

- WIC Works Social Media Guidance: <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/topics-z/social-media-guidance>
- Social Media Toolkit accessed at:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf
- Guide to Writing for Social Media accessed at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/GuidetoWritingforSocialMedia.pdf> .
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service 2006. *WIC Nutrition Education Guidance, Appendix A*.
- Social Marketing Campaign (Massachusetts):
https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing_Center/gallery/socialmarketingcamp.htm