

IV. Organization and Management

4.1.070 Social Media Communications and Outreach

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Revised:

POLICY: The use of social media can be a powerful way to reach our target audience with strategic and effective messages. Local WIC agencies may choose to use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Pandora, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, etc.) to provide information to applicants and participants about the Missouri WIC program and to promote WIC services and benefits. Social media sites facilitated by local agency staff must be monitored by designated professional staff in the agency to ensure all content is appropriate. Local agency (LA) staff shall not use their personal social media accounts to represent the local agency or the WIC Program. If utilizing social media, the local WIC agency must develop a policy and procedure for social media usage.

PROCEDURES:

- A. Social media sites are considered to be an extension of the LA and may be used to:
1. Promote WIC services.
 2. Announce upcoming events.
 3. Invite participants to nutrition or prenatal breastfeeding classes or support groups.
 4. Advertise breastfeeding promotion or nutrition events.
 5. Promote the fully breastfeeding food package.
 6. Provide evidence-based breastfeeding and nutrition information and resources.
 7. Help new mothers connect with peer counselors.
 8. Communicate information on WIC approved foods.
 9. Recipes using WIC foods.
 10. Link to state WIC nutrition and breastfeeding resources.
- B. Local agency staff shall be responsible for what they write and the messages conveyed to WIC participants.
1. Local agency staff, including peer counselors, and LA volunteers must follow the [Participant Confidentiality Policy 1.01700](#) and shall not post any WIC participant information.
 2. Only local agency address or phone numbers and agency social media contacts shall be provided through social media.
 3. Local agency social media sites shall be used for WIC and Health Department related business.
 4. All information and website links posted on a social media site shall be evidence-

based and in line with information provided by the state WIC Program.

5. Local agency must designate professional staff to monitor all information posted through social media and have full access to the account. It is critical that any social media be monitored on a frequent basis to ensure information is kept up-to-date and that any inappropriate messages posted by the public are removed as quickly as possible to ensure highest quality information.
 6. All information posted on social media shall be culturally sensitive, professional and communications are in good taste. Messages and content must be appropriate to the intended audience.
 7. Items or information related to religion or politics shall not be posted.
 8. Disparaging remarks about an individual or healthcare provider will not be tolerated and can result in loss of funding.
 9. Social media sites must include “This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer” statement.
 10. The local agency Facebook page must include a disclaimer that advice from other participants should never replace the advice from medical experts. If they have questions or concerns about their health or their baby’s/child’s well-being, they should always contact their physician or their local WIC office.
 11. Social media shall not be used to advertise or promote specific product brands.
 12. Agency staff shall not counsel participants or answer detailed questions through social media.
 13. Staff should ask when they can contact the participant either by phone or invite the participant into the WIC clinic to discuss in more detail.
 14. Local agency staff shall not use their personal social media accounts to represent their local WIC agency or Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program.
 15. It is the responsibility of local agency designated professional staff to ensure that agency employees who are representing their local agency through social media have read and understand the social media policy and consequences for not adhering to policy.
 16. Providing a link to the WIC state website is not required, but is allowed when appropriate. One of the purposes of social media is to reach persons who would not normally look to a government agency website for information/guidance.
- C. The local WIC agency must develop a policy and procedure for social media usage. The social media policy must address, but is not limited to the following:
1. The purpose, goals, objectives and strategies for the social media site.
 2. Approved content for the site(s)
 3. Key roles and responsibilities for contributors, reviewers and administration of the page.
 4. Outline a review schedule - how frequently reviewed and information updated.

5. The local agency who utilizes social media shall attach their social media policy to the annual Local Agency Plan (LAP) to be approved.
6. If your agency chooses to allow comments, it is recommended that the local WIC agency add a comments policy. Example:

We welcome you and your comments to the _____ Health Department WIC Facebook page. The purpose of this page is to share and discuss information about the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children program.

The _____ Health Department WIC reserves the right to remove any comments that are deemed inappropriate or off-topic from the purpose of this page.

Please note that the comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinions and position of _____ Health Department WIC or its employees. If you have questions concerning the operation of this online discussion site, please contact-_____.

D. Social media is a digital conversation between people.

Considerations when using Social Media:

1. Facebook
 - a. A Facebook Page can be set up to provide information to a large number of people. Anyone can like the page. It is not recommended to allow the public to make posts if the page cannot be monitored frequently throughout the day.
 - b. A Facebook Group is a private page which make it easy to connect with specific sets of people. This allows for more interaction and discussion. WIC provider designated professional staff must be available to monitor discussions for a Group. Participation must be by invitation and a WIC participant should not be made a member without their knowledge.
 - c. It is recommended that local agency staff not to “Friend” WIC participants. In small communities it may be difficult to prevent, but staff should be cautious in becoming a Facebook Friend with a WIC participant on their personal Facebook page.
 - d. Post often to keep your audience engaged, but not too often. It is recommended to post no more than one to two times per day. Experts suggest that posts are viewed more during the week than on weekends. Fridays have the least number of views.
 - e. Keep messages short, simple, kind and friendly. Pay attention to correct spelling and grammar.

- f. Use acronyms that everyone understands or spell out acronyms that could cause confusion.
 - g. People need to get something out of the time they spend with you. Make reading your posts or comments worth their time.
 - h. Post Facebook chats, events, quizzes, contests/challenges, questions, videos, photos, widgets and interactive posts and comments to encourage followers to participate in conversations.
2. Twitter:
- a. Twitter may be used to share information, commentary, descriptions of events, and to highlight online content.
 - b. Keep your content short and simple to make it easy for followers to retweet the message without having to edit.
 - c. Consider posting weekly at a minimum.
 - d. Consider holding Twitter events to encourage followers to participate in conversations about your priority topics.
3. Text Messaging:
- a. Text messaging is a simple and easy way to reach a large portion of participants and can include links to other media channels.
 - b. Text messages should be short and concise.
 - c. Abbreviations should only be used when they are easily understood and do not change the meaning of the message.
 - d. Links to traditional web sites should be avoided and links to sites designed specifically for mobile devices should be used.
 - e. Texting is a good way to remind participants of their WIC appointments and what to bring.
 - e. Short targeted educational messages can be texted to participants and they can be encouraged to contact their local WIC agency if they have more questions. For example, a new breastfeeding mom could be texted “How is breastfeeding going? Call WIC at _____ if you have any questions.”
 - f. A cell phone is not needed to send a text. If the cell phone carrier of the participant is known, texting can be done by computer using most email programs. See [EMAILING/TEXTING CLIENTS](#) instructions.
4. Online video sharing sites, such as YouTube, Flickr, Google, etc.:
- a. Simple, easy-to-follow “stories” work best, with a single message or call to action.
 - b. Use of jargon, technical information, or detailed charts and graphs should be avoided.

c. Anyone with Internet access can upload, share, view and comment on video footage.

E. Promote your social media sites.

1. Provide links through your local WIC agency web page.
2. Provide information on referral lists and other handouts.
3. Promote in your clinic with signs and word of mouth.
4. Cross-promote all social media sites to other media channels with similar audiences.