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POLICY AND PROCEDURE	
SUBJECT/TITLE:	General Communication Protocols
Distributed to:	All Employees
HEALTH COMMISSIONER	Michael E. Martin, M.D.
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REVIEW FREQUENCY:	5 years
BOARD APPROVAL DATE:	N/A
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General Communication Protocols

Purpose: To standardize communication procedures with internal and external stakeholders, for both routine communications and risk communications (emergency/crisis response to a public health threat.) A communications protocol is necessary to ensure that (1) health information disseminated is accurate, timely, relevant, and accessible to the target audience; (2) all staff understand their role in the communications process, and (3) coordination is done with other agencies to ensure a unified, consistent message.

I. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)

1. The Health Commissioner or Administrator is designated as the lead PIO for the Scioto County Health Department.
2. The Environmental Director and Nursing Director are designated as departmental PIOs.
3. For matters concerning emergency response, especially across jurisdictions, the PHEP coordinator may serve as PIO as approved by the Health Commissioner, to provide consistent messaging from SCHD and PCHD.
4. For matters concerning epidemiological response, especially across jurisdictions, the Regional Epidemiologist may serve as PIO as approved by the Health Commissioner, to provide consistent messaging from SCHD and PCHD.
5. A subject matter expert, designated by the Health Commissioner may provide the information or interview instead of the PIO.

II. KEY ASSUMPTIONS

1. There may be communication barriers such as foreign language, hearing and visual impairments, educational level, etc.
2. Different types of information will have to be developed for different target audiences, including people representing diverse cultural backgrounds.
3. Communication must be coordinated across jurisdictions and agencies to ensure consistent messages.
4. In an emergency, it is highly likely there will be widespread circulation of conflicting information, misinformation, and rumors.
5. Demand for information by affected and interested individuals and groups will be high during a crisis.

6. During an emergency, there are a wide range of emotions that can affect the receipt of and response to information disseminated.

III. STANDARD COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

A. Internal Clearance, Approval, and Retention for Written Material:

1. All information to be released to employees, the public, the media, and to community partners must be authorized and/or pre-approved by the Health Commissioner; or his/her designee.
2. Press releases should be submitted in draft format and reviewed by the Health Commissioner or his/her designee, prior to being submitted to the media.
3. The Health Commissioner and/or Department Director must approve all brochures, newsletters, flyers and similar documents developed or reproduced for education and information purposes that will be disseminated to external stakeholders and the public.
4. Copies of all disseminated materials (press releases, media reports, brochures, newsletters, etc.) are to be filed in the department from which they originated.
5. Communication materials developed by the Scioto County Health Department must display the Scioto County Health Department logo and contact information. Communication materials obtained from other sources may be used if in the public domain or by permission of the document source. The Scioto County Health Department may display the logo and contact information if space allows and if in the public domain or permission granted by the document source.

B. Media Inquiries and Requests for Interviews:

1. All media inquiries and requests for interviews to SCHD must be referred to the SCHD Health Commissioner or his/her designated PIO for authorization and coordination.
2. Authorization of interviews will depend on:
 - a. Appropriateness of the interview topic;
 - b. Availability of selected key staff;
 - c. Appropriateness for the disclosure of the information;
 - d. The effect the interview may have; and
 - e. The intent of the interview.
3. The Health Commissioner may delegate a staff subject matter expert to conduct the interview.
4. The Health Commissioner or delegated PIO will arrange for the interview.
5. During a major event or crisis, the Health Commissioner or his/her designated PIO may arrange for press conferences and/or press releases.
6. The Health Commissioner, designated PIO, or designated subject matter expert will be the spokesperson for interviews and press conferences.

C. Dissemination of Information:

1. Information and/or press releases developed will be disseminated to external partners and the media using the following options:
 - a. Individual Interview;
 - b. Press/news release;
 - c. News conference;
 - d. Posting on website;
 - e. Posting on Facebook;
 - f. Facsimile;
 - g. Ohio Public Health Communication System;
 - h. other options as appropriate.
2. SCHD will utilize the following resources to disseminate information to stakeholders and people with special needs in Scioto County:

- a. Scioto County Fire Departments, <https://www.firedepartment.net/directory/ohio/scioto-county>
- b. Scioto County Law Enforcement Departments- <https://www.usacops.com/oh/scioto.html>
- c. Scioto County Schools, <http://www.scoesc.k12.oh.us/AboutUs.aspx>
- d. Scioto County Nursing Homes, <http://local-nursing-homes.com/nursing-homes/ohio/scioto-county>
- e. Directory of Scioto County Elected Officials, <https://lookup.boe.ohio.gov/vtrapp/scioto/cnm.aspx>
- f. Scioto County Board of Developmental Disabilities <http://www.sciotocountydd.org/>
- g. Area Agency on Aging Region 7 <https://www.aaa7.org/>
- h. ADAMHS Board of Adams, Lawrence and Scioto Counties <https://adamhsals.org/>
- i. Community Action Organization of Scioto County <http://www.caosciotocounty.org/>

D. Communication for Special Populations:

1. SCHD will provide information in languages identified for Scioto County (English and Spanish; other languages by request) and will utilize the following resources for these languages:
 - a. Center for Disease Control (CDC);
 - b. Ohio Department of Health (ODH);
 - c. Immunization Action Coalition (IAC);
 - d. Approved Internet resources.
2. SCHD will utilize Affordable Language Services (513) 745-0888 for immediate over-the-phone interpreting when information is unavailable in an identified language.
3. SCHD will provide verbal reading to people with vision impairment when braille literature is unavailable.
4. SCHD will utilize Deaf Services Center in Portsmouth to provide American Sign Language interpreting and/or other communication services with the hearing-impaired community. 740-356-7200.
5. SCHD will develop information in a sixth grade or lower literacy level.
6. SCHD will develop information in a culturally and ethnicity sensitive format.

E. Modes of Communication:

SCHD utilizes many tools to communicate with internal and external stakeholders. These modes of communication include:

1. Land lines and cell phones:
 - a. SCHD has one main phone line 740-355-8358, and each staff member has an extension. Each SCHD staff member with field responsibilities and/or 24/7/365 on-call responsibilities also has a cell phone provided by SCHD.
 - b. Phones are the primary communication tool to contact SCHD staff during regular business hours, after hours, and during an emergency.
 - c. The main phone line can be used to provide a public information message.
 - d. Staffing for the main phone line outside of normal business hours will be considered during an emergency.
2. E-mail:
 - a. Each SCHD staff member has an e-mail account, provided by the Scioto County network.
 - b. Email is a primary communication tool to contact SCHD staff during and after business hours.
 - c. Email is a primary communication tool to contact and disseminate information to internal and external stakeholders.
3. Fax:
 - a. SCHD maintains 2 fax lines: 330-675-7875; 330-675-2494.
 - b. SCHD maintains a fax data base for emergency partners.
4. Social Media:

- a. SCHD maintains a web site: www.sciotocountyhealthdepartment.com, where information including SCHD's emergency contact info is posted.
 - b. SCHD maintains a Facebook Page titled Scioto County Health Department
 - c. Public comment is encouraged at these social media sites and will be reviewed and evaluated for improvement purposes only.
5. Multi Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) Radios:
- a. SCHD has 6 portable MARCS Radios and 1 base station.
 - b. Portable MARCS Radios are available to staff for fieldwork and emergency operations; base stations are placed in areas frequented by staff.
 - c. MARCS radios will be monitored during regular business hours and used during emergencies according to the SCHD Emergency Response Plan.
 - d. MARCS radios will be tested/drilled monthly.
6. Ohio Public Health Communication System (OPHCS):
- a. SCHD uses the OPHCS to support secure 24/7/365 notification and alerting via phone, text, e-mail, and fax.
 - b. SCHD will use OPHCS for receipt and distribution of health alerts, prevention guidelines, disease investigation efforts and/or preparedness planning to ODH, LHDs, hospitals and other public health partners.
 - c. All SCHD OPHCS users are assigned to roles and role groups, based on position and program responsibilities.
 - d. OPHCS alerts will be sent by roles or role group.
 - e. OPHCS will be drilled every two months (bi-monthly).
7. Communication Technology Disruption or Population With No Access to Communication Technology
- a. Hand Deliver. SCHD may choose to hand deliver messages to residents.
 - b. Law Enforcement Notification. SCHD may contact the local law enforcement agency (Sheriff's Department or New Boston Police Department) to have the affected area patrolled and announce a specified message using the cruiser intercom system.

VI. Training and Plan Maintenance

A. Training

- 1. SCHD will assign an employee(s) to develop, distribute, review and update the Communication Plan.
- 2. The plan will be reviewed yearly and updated with any changes by the assigned employee(s).
- 3. The plan will be reviewed and updated based on lessons learned during real world events and exercises.
- 4. SCHD's lead and designated PIOs will be required to complete the following trainings:
 - a. ICS 100
 - b. ICS 200
 - c. ICS 250a;
 - d. ICS 300
 - e. ICS 400
 - f. ICS 700
 - g. ICS 702a;
 - h. ICS 800
 - i. ICS 802
 - j. CDC Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Online Training.
- 5. SCHD will exercise the Communication Plan during tabletop, functional, and/or full-scale exercises; and update the plan with findings from the After Action Report(s) (AAR).

B. Plan Maintenance

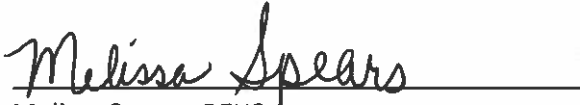
SCHD will review Communication Response Plan at least every 5 years and revised as needed.

Approved by:



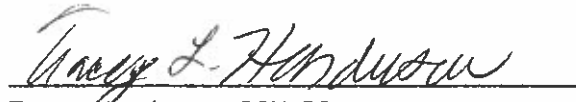
Michael E. Martin, M.D.
Health Commissioner

date 5/24/22



Melissa Spears, REHS
Administrator

date 5/25/22



Tracey Henderson, BSN, RS
Nursing Director

date 5/25/22



Garet Bennett, REHS
Director of Environmental Health

date 5-26-22