

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention WIC Nutrition Program

Effective: October 1, 2012

Policy No. OM-11

Revised: October 1, 2020

Media Relations

Authority

Maine DHHS, Office of the Commissioner, Policy # DHHS-37-10, Significant Reportable Events

Maine DHHS, Office of the Commissioner, Policy #DHHS-01-12, Public Communications Policy

Policy

1. All WIC-related news releases, news features, press conferences, media advisories and other WIC communications with the news media shall be done by or authorized by the DHHS Director of Communications or designee.

Procedure

1. Media requests and inquiries shall be primarily directed to the Commissioner's Office of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and to the Director of Communications.
2. All WIC employees shall notify the State Agency WIC Director **before**:
 - 2.1. Agreeing to on-camera interviews with national television networks; or
 - 2.2. Agreeing to any news media interviews about controversial topics or public health emergencies.

Initiating Contact with the News Media

3. The Maine CDC Director, or designee, shall be authorized to initiate WIC contact with the news media. (This provision applies to standard media communications methods such as news releases and press conferences.)
4. Employees contacted by the news media shall e-mail a brief message providing pertinent information about the contact directly to the State Agency WIC Director immediately after the contact. This provision applies to letters to the editor, opinion pieces, phone calls, and letters of complaint and to standard media communications methods such as news releases and press conferences.

5. The State Agency WIC Director shall notify the Director of Communications concerning all media requests.
6. No commitments to news releases, press conferences or other news dissemination activities, including commitments in applications for grants or other requests for funding, shall be made without authorization from the Director of Communications.

Reporting Significant Reportable Events

7. Immediately upon receipt and determination that a significant reportable event(s) has occurred, the State Agency WIC Program Director or designee must report the event(s) to each of the following individuals by email:
 - 7.1. The Associate Director, Office of Disease Prevention
 - 7.2. The Deputy Director, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
 - 7.3. The DHHS Director of Communications
8. Email reports shall be labeled “Significant Reportable Event” in the subject line.
 - 8.1. The email reporting a significant reportable event shall include the following information:
 - 8.1.1. What happened?
 - 8.1.2. When did it happen?
 - 8.1.3. Where did it happen?
 - 8.1.4. Who was involved?
 - 8.1.5. Is this involving a client in DHHS custody?
 - 8.1.6. Current status and action plan; plan shall designate responsibility for managing the incident going forward.

Confidentiality

9. Utilizing best practices to safeguarding participant information, WIC employees are prohibited from:
 - 9.1. Revealing or confirming health or medical information about an individual to the media.
 - 9.2. Supplying reporters or other media representatives with information that could lead to the revelation or confirmation of an individual’s health or medical information.

- 9.3. Supplying reporters or other media representatives with information that identifies or could lead to the identification of clients or participants in WIC programs if such identification is prohibited by constitutional, federal or state law or regulation or by WIC policy, protocol or procedure.
- 9.4. Directly or indirectly contacting such above-described individuals, clients or participants on behalf of reporters or other media representatives seeking interviews or information.
- 9.5. In certain situations, this provision may be waived by the Director of Communications or the Commissioner.