



Protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Minnesotans

Memo

To: WIC Coordinators
From: State WIC Staff
Date: April 18, 2012
Subject: **Using Text Messages for Contacting Participants**

Local Agencies in the **Spotlight**

WIC appointment reminders are a great tool for improving clinic show-rates and for maintaining caseload. But have you noticed that your phone reminders often go unanswered? Most young adults **prefer text messaging over phone calls or emails**. In response to that preference, some local WIC agencies are now sending WIC reminders by text message.

Some things to consider about texting:

- **Equipment** – does your agency have a cell phone with an appropriate data plan for text messaging? Otherwise, there are free services for sending a text from your computer to a cell phone.
 - Gmail (Google.com) See [“Using Google Mail to Send Text Messages from a Computer”](#) from the November 9, 2011 *WIC Wednesday Update* for Gmail instructions
 - TxtDrop.com
- **Permission to text** – text recipients *might be charged* depending on their cell phone plan. Ask participants if they prefer to receive text messages and if so, obtain their permission to text them. This may be verbal or written based on local agency policy/procedures.

Olmsted County WIC Program’s Experience:

Olmsted County WIC has been using text messaging for appointment and late voucher-pickup reminders. They use a free service from the TxtDrop.com website. Here is the process Olmsted County follows:

1. WIC staff ask a participant if she would prefer a text or phone call appointment reminder. Only participants who agree to text messages will receive text messages.
 - If the participant prefers a text message, **“tm” is typed in the comment section** in HuBERT next to the mobile phone number.

- If a participant prefers a phone call reminder, “**vm**” (for voice mail) is **typed** in the comment section.
2. WIC staff use the TxtDrop.com site to text message participants reminding them of their WIC appointment.
 3. The following text message wording is used:

For appointment reminders:

In email address box: WIC@co.olmsted.mn.us
 WIC Appt (Date) (time)
 MA/Income needed. ?’s call only xxx-xxxx (*insert phone number*)

For late voucher pick up:

In email address box: WIC@co.olmsted.mn.us
 P/U (month) vouchers by_____ (Date)
 Appt. needed before_____ (Date) [optional if need to recert.]
 ?’s call only xxx-xxx (*insert phone number*)

Staff have both HuBERT and TxtDrop.com open and toggle back and forth.

Olmsted County WIC staff report that participants like the service and say Thanks!

Lake County WIC Program Experience:

Lake County uses text messaging for certification and nutrition education appointment reminders. Here is the process Lake County uses:

1. WIC staff ask a participant if she’d would prefer a text message reminder. If so, a **Permission to Text** form is completed. See attached.
2. WIC staff use a cell phone with an appropriate data plan to send text messages.
3. The following are sample text messages:

Recert reminder: wic appt rmndr for thurs. march 16th for amy @ 10:00am. Pls bring eligib lettr.

Midcert: wic rmndr for Jenny for thurs. march 16th @ 11:00 am. Will do hght, wght & hgb.

Nut Ed Reminder: Nut Ed/voucher p/u rmndr thurs. march 16th @ 1:00 pm. No child neces. OR

Nut Ed Reminder for INCP: Nut Ed/voucher p/u rmndr thurs. march 16th @ 1:00 pm Pls bring John for follow up. OR

Nut Ed Reminder for PG: Nut Ed/voucher p/u rmndr thurs. march 16th @ 1:30 pm will do weight check.

Thanks to Olmsted County and Lake County WIC Programs for sharing their innovative ideas for reaching participants!