Memo

To: **WIC Coordinators**

From: **Program Unit**

Date: **August 27, 2014**

Subject: **Summary from Text Messaging Survey**

Thank you to everyone who responded to the WIC text messaging survey that was sent out in late May. We received 77 completed surveys and have summarized the results below.

- 25% have used text messaging services in WIC.
- Of those that have not used text messaging, almost 90% are interested in using text messaging.
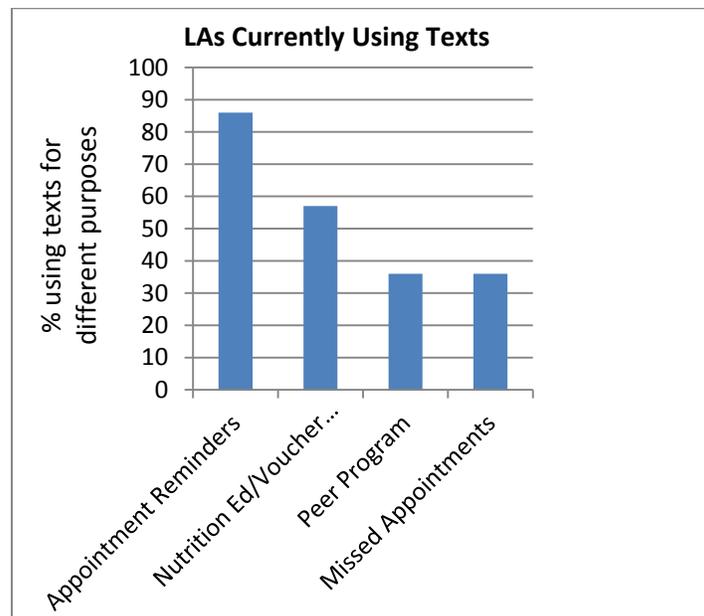
- Most local agencies using text messaging services currently are using a cell phone to send the messages.
- Other systems being used for texting include through email, Txtdrop, Red Oxygen, Verizon, and AT&T Messaging Toolkit.
- The costs for using different systems varies depending on the different systems used, but for most agencies that reported costs, it was between $40 - $50 a month for the service.

- The least expensive systems for sending text messages were from an email account or using a free service such as Txtdrop.
- Staff time also varied depending on the system being used and the size of the agency.
- 28% of those using text messaging offer texts in other languages, with Spanish being the most common. However, text messages could be composed in any language.
- 86% of those using text messaging reported that it is working well or very well for their agency.
- By and large, participants report "liking" or loving" text messaging. However, it was noted that those participants receiving texts had already opted in for receiving texts.

Common questions/issues that local agency staff shared about text messaging:
- Can text messages be sent from an email account rather than a mobile phone account?
  - Yes, some agencies are already using this option. It appears that each cellular provider has a different email address domain for sending texts this way. Here are a few online resources on this topic:
    - [WikiHow: How to Send a Text from Email](#)
    - [New York Times article: Sending Texts by E-Mail](#)
  - Caution: if using this method to send a text message to multiple recipients at once, put the recipient addresses in the BCC field so that a single recipient will not see other participants' phone numbers.
  - Consult with your local agency management and IT staff before using text messaging in your local agency.

- Some local agencies are not allowed to use text messaging due to a local agency policy.

- Is there a system available in HuBERT to collect phone numbers and track who has opted in or out for text messaging?
  - Yes, Infoview Report Templates were designed to be used in conjunction with opt in/opt out information documented in Local Use Question position #6. Those reports include:
    - [One Call: Future Appointments](#)
    - [One Call: Missed Appointments](#)
    - [One Call: Missed Nutrition Visit (Pick-up)](#)
    - [One Call: Roster](#)
  - Some local agencies are using other fields in demographics to record this information such as who has opted in for texting and the cellular provider they use.

- Can you set up text messaging to have a "no reply" option so that a LA doesn't have to manage and follow up with response texts?
  - This would depend on the type of service you are using. Check with your provider.

- Can text messages be set up ahead of time and have it delivered at a future time?
    - This would depend on the type of service you are using. Check with your provider. We know that this is possible with some text messaging services.

- Is there a way to track show rates to evaluate whether text messaging for appointment reminders improves no show rates?
    - Yes, one way to do this would be to compare show rates before and after implementing text messaging. Ideas for assessing show rates/no show rates were provided in a [2012 Wednesday Update Memo](#).

- Why doesn't the state set up a text messaging service for all WIC local agencies?
    - The choice to use text messaging or not is a local decision and there are many different needs and solutions to accomplish text messaging for WIC participants.

- How do we make sure we maintain data privacy of WIC participant phone numbers, etc. with text messaging?
    - You should check with your text messaging service provider about data privacy policies and practices. WIC participant data are private data and must be safeguarded as such. If participant phone numbers are given to a third party for texting services, you must get consent from the participant/parent/guardian to share this data.

Contact your State WIC Consultant with any questions about text messaging for WIC or to help determine if texting is right for your local agency.