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| **EFFECTIVE DATE:**  1/8/2019 | |
| **POLICY #:**  **N/A** | **SUBJECT/TITLE:**  Use of Facebook/Texting to Improve Partner Services Policy |
| **SUPERCEDES:**  NEW | **CATEGORY:**  STD |
| **AUTHORITY CATEGORY:**  State Law/Rule | **AUTHORITY:**  § 26:5C-3.; § 8:57-1.10; 26:4-33. |
| **LAST REVIEW DATE:**  1/8/2019 | **LAST REVISION DATE:**  11/8/2018 |
| **DATE OF COMPLIANCE:**  1/8/2019 | **CONTACT FOR INQUIRIES:** greta.anschuetz@doh.nj.gov |
| **PROCEDURE(S):**  YES | **DISTRIBUTION:**  NJDOH STD Employees |
| ATTACHMENTS: No |  |

**PURPOSE:**

Partner notification has played an important role in STD and HIV control; and its practice must continue to evolve along with available and effective tools that can be used for conducting partner services. Over the past several years, patients diagnosed with STDs (including HIV) increasingly identify cell phone applications (apps) and internet sites as their preferred method for finding potential sexual partners. Often times, identifying and locating information for these partners is limited to the screen names and profiles on these forums, therefore rendering these technologies necessary and effective tools for locating and informing partners of their possible exposure to HIV/STD. The relative anonymity of these venues often limits the amount of information patients know about their sexual partners, which can impede partner notification. In many cases, the only information known about a partner is a screen name, profile, or email address. When partner-locating information is limited in this way, the internet then becomes the only viable option for contacting partners exposed to life or health-threatening infections. For these reasons, national agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) encourage the use of the internet for HIV/STD prevention services, including partner notification, and Internet-based Partner Services (IPS) has become commonplace in State and Local Departments of Health throughout the country (Kachur, R. et. al. *Introducing Technology into Partner Services: A Toolkit for Programs,* Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2015).

**DEFINITIONS:**

1. Disease specific: any term relating to any STD/HIV diagnosis, lab or treatment information
2. Protected Health Information (PHI) referred to as personal health information, generally refers to demographic information, medical histories, test and laboratory results, mental health conditions, insurance information, and other data that a healthcare professional collects to identify an individual.
3. DIS: Disease Intervention Specialist who are the state employees responsible for conducting partner notification for STD and HIV cases
4. PHR: Public Health Representatives are the official state title for DIS.

**SCOPE/APPLICABILITY:**

For all partner notification work when traditional means (phone calls, letters) are not yielding a response, the NJDOH employee may seek to either attempt a text message or a Facebook message (if applicable) to attempt to get the patient to call the NJDOH employee.

Using Facebook “Messenger” and never posting to a public wall, Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) will contact persons diagnosed with an STD/HIV or persons named as sexual contacts to STDs/HIV with messages such as those listed below. DIS will not use any apps or add-ons for their work Facebook account.

Using their state issued cell phone, Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) will contact persons diagnosed with an STD/HIV or persons named as sexual contacts to STDs/HIV with text messages such as those listed below.

Under no circumstances should disease specific information or protected health information (PHI) ever be shared via Facebook Messenger or texting. The goal of this communication method is to get a patient to call a State of New Jersey staff person to discuss further information per current follow-up policies.

Approved message language to use when Facebook messaging/texting clients for partner services:

I am Jane Doe with the State of New Jersey and I need to speak with you. Please call me as soon as possible at 609-633-xxxx.

I am with the State of New Jersey and I have important information regarding your personal health. Please call me as soon as possible at 609-633-xxxx.

I am with the State of New Jersey and I have information regarding an urgent health matter. Please call me at 609-633-xxxx.

I have made numerous attempts to contact you. It is very important that we talk. Please call me at 609-633-xxxx.

Your appointment with Jane Doe is at 3:00 p.m. today, call me if you have any question Jane Doe 609-633-xxxx.

Your appointment with Jane Doe is at 3:00 p.m. today at 92nd and Powell, call me if you have any question Jane Doe 609-633-xxxx.

You missed your appointment. Please call 609-633-xxxx to reschedule

Responding to Facebook messaging/text messages.

If a client responds to your text message with another text message instead of calling, use an approved message (see below) to encourage the client to call you. Never respond to a text message from an individual that contains Protected Health Information (PHI). Instead, send a new text message to encourage the individual to call you.

Examples are:

I am not able to give you specific information in a text message. Please call me at 609-633-XXXX.

I can tell you more when you call. Please call me at 609-633-XXXX.

This is urgent and needs your immediate attention. Please call me at 609-633-XXXX.

The information I have for you is confidential. I can tell you more when you call. Please call me at 609-633-XXXX.

When a patient is refusing to call unless you give more information, you must contact your supervisor or manager for guidance on how to respond. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that staff understand the proper use of Facebook/text messaging by randomly reviewing messages from staff. Reviews should occur at least every 60 days for PHR Trainee/3 DIS and every 90 days for PHR2 DIS. Facebook messenger/texting cannot be deleted from your work account for 120 days since the last message was sent. Reviewers shall document review conducted and results of each review and retain in a secure file.

**PROCEDURE(S):**

Personal accounts should not be logged into your work PC. Supervisors are responsible for checking this a least monthly. Please create a work account that does not link to your personal account and, should you receive friend requests from your family and friends, please do not accept them and communicate that this is your work account only.

1. Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) (make sure you are not signed into your personal account)
2. Fill in the requested information on the right of the page where it reads SIGN UP.
   1. Be sure to enter your first and last name as it appears on your email/business cards;
   2. Enter your work email address for the Email section
   3. Enter your phone number as your work cell phone

(Once you sign up, you'll need to confirm your work email address and work cell. Facebook will send an email/text message to the account to help you confirm your account.)

1. Add a profile pic using the DOH logo or an NJDOH approved image (as used for brochures)
2. Once you have created the Account, go to your ABOUT section and add the following:
   1. Work – Department of Health
   2. Place You’ve Lived – Trenton, NJ or Newark, NJ

(The other sections can be left blank)

1. Next, click the upside-down triangle for a pull down menu. Click SETTINGS > PRIVACY.
   1. The “*who can see your future posts*” section should be NO ONE
   2. *“Who can send you friend requests; Who can look you up using the email address you provided; Who can look you up using the phone number you provided”* sections should all be EVERYONE (this allows patients who you left your work cell phone to contact you via Facebook if they are trying to determine if you are legitimate)
   3. Next click NOTIFICATIONS from the menu on the left.

For the Email section, check off the ALL NOTIFICATIONS circle (this will allow Facebook to send an email to your work acct whenever there is activity on your page)

(Be sure to Unsubscribe from emails about *“Updates on your friends since you last logged in”* and “*People you may know”*)

\*\*\*For information on how to make your personal account private, see <https://www.facebook.com/help/445588775451827>

# Protocol for DIS

1. Send 1st message within 1 business day of initiating text or Facebook contact.
   1. If no response:
      1. Send 2nd message within 2-3 business days.
      2. Send 3rd message within 5-6 business days.
      3. Disposition the record as Unable to Locate within 1 week after 3rd message
   2. If response:
      1. Please use appropriate follow-up message listed above to get the patient to call you
         1. If patient calls, update information in CDRSS with information learned
            1. Pursue patient via new contact information learned (i.e., field visit, etc.)
         2. If patient does not call, after several messages/texts, close as refusal
2. Facebook messenger/texting cannot be deleted from your work account for 120 days since the last message was sent.
   1. Whenever possible, electronically copies of communications should be stored with the case information.

Again, no disease information or other Protected Health Information (PHI) should ever be shared via social media. After a patient calls into the New Jersey Department of Health, normal protocols should be utilized to ensure you are talking to the correct patient.

This document will be review annually by the Program Director and Field Operations Manager and re-certified by DIS and Supervisors annually to ensure policies and protocols are being followed as described above.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read the above document and agree to abide by the policy and protocol described above.

Signature and Date of DIS

Signature and Date of Supervisor