

TUSCARAWAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

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STATEMENT OF PROMULGATION

The Tuscarawas County Health Department (TCHD) **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** establishes the **general policies and procedures for TCHD communications with the public, partners and staff, during day to day operations and during times of emergency.**

Program areas are directed to implement training efforts and exercise these plans in order to maintain the overall preparedness and response capabilities of the TCHD.

TCHD will maintain this plan, reviewing it and reauthorizing it at least annually; findings from its utilization in exercises or real incidents will inform updates.

This **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** is hereby adopted, and all program areas are directed to implement it. All previous versions of the **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN, COMMUNICATION POLICY (ERF#2), NOTIFICATION AND WARNING (ERF#3), PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING (ERF#4)** and their attachments are hereby rescinded.

Katie Seward, Health Commissioner, Tuscarawas County General Health District

2/13/19

Date

Board of Health President, Tuscarawas County General Health District

2/13/19

Date

RECORD OF CHANGES

The Health Commissioner for the Tuscarawas County Health Department authorizes all changes to the Tuscarawas County Health Department **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**. Change notifications are sent to those on the distribution list. To annotate changes:

- Add new pages and destroy obsolete pages.
- Make minor pen and ink changes as identified by letter.
- Record changes on this page.
- File copies of change notifications behind the last page of this plan.

Change Number	Effective Date	Version	Significant Changes: Page Number & Summary	Name

RECORD OF DISTRIBUTION

A single copy of this Tuscarawas County Health Department **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** is distributed to each person in the positions listed below.

Date Received	Program Area	Title	Name
	Administration	Health Commissioner, TCHD	Katie Seward
	PHEP Office	PHEP Coordinator	Paul Westlake

This plan is available to all Tuscarawas County Health Department employees on the TCHD website. Two copies can also be found in the department operations center (DOC) in hard copy format. Additionally, each Director and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator possess an individual copy.

PURPOSE

The Tuscarawas County Health Department's (TCHD) Communication Plan provides a framework for timely, accurate, and credible communication and information dissemination. The plan outlines the roles and responsibilities for TCHD personnel in communicating with employees, response partners, the media, government entities, and the community. It is essential for successful communications with internal and external partners on a daily basis and during a crisis response.

The Communications Plan ensures that TCHD is visible, accessible and accountable to the community we serve. TCHD communication will always strive to enhance the profile of our organization and to preserve the integrity and respect that our organization has established.

The purposes of this plan include, but is not limited to:

- Build trust
- Disseminate accurate, consistent and timely information to protect the public's health
- Minimize or dispel misinformation or rumors
- Inform and instruct widely divergent audiences (e.g., employees, customers, emergency responders, and the news media)
- Minimize panic or fear
- Encourage the adoption of appropriate protective actions by individuals

The TCHD follows and uses the Incident Command System (ICS). This document complies with the intent and tenets of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

KEY OPERATIONAL ROLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

ROLES

- Only the Board of Health, and the Health Commissioner are authorized to speak to media representatives on behalf of the organization. The Health Commissioner is the PIO and the official spokesperson for Tuscarawas County Health Department (TCHD). Staff or volunteers will not speak to the media on behalf of the organization without the prior authorization from one of the above parties.
- All media requests involving patients, employees, volunteers or TCHD Division activities should be directed to the Health Commissioner who can then designate a spokesperson.
- As the county's leading health agency, TCHD is responsible for maintaining communication with local, regional, state, federal, private and other partners during an incident requiring activation of this plan.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Dissemination and sharing of timely, accurate, and credible information among stakeholders (affected, interested, and influential target audiences) is one of the most important facets of communications.
- Education will be an important part of the communication plan.
- It is likely that particular individuals and groups will be hard to reach, including people with limited English language proficiency and those who are hearing and visually impaired.
- Different types of information will have to be communicated to different target audiences.
- Communication must be coordinated among all relevant individuals and groups to ensure consistent messages.
- In an emergency, it is highly likely there will be widespread circulation of conflicting information, misinformation, and rumors.
- Demand for information by affected and interested individuals and groups will be high.
- Negative consequences will affect those who experience a large-scale crisis or emergency, either first hand as survivors or as observers. The effects can include anxiety, depression, family disruption and violence, substance abuse, absenteeism, and other related physical and mental health symptoms. Every effort needs to be made to prevent such negative outcomes.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

TCHD's focus will be on the use of plain language to provide messages that are clear, consistent, objective and easy to understand. Be cautious with using acronyms and abbreviations. In addition, communication will encourage two-way, participatory involvement that emphasizes inclusion and considers a range of thoughts and ideas.

Information dissemination must also be culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible to special populations when suitable (based on Office of Civil Rights (OCR)). See **Attachment I - Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communications Policy**.

ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE FOR ACCESS & FUNCTIONAL NEEDS POPULATIONS

Individuals with access and functional needs can encounter many challenges in accessing public information. The main forms of information release will likely be television, radio, newspaper, social media and the internet. However, individuals with vision or hearing problems, impaired reading or English-comprehension ability, cultural differences, or lack of access to these sources, will be left uninformed. Alternative methods to reach functional needs populations include, but are not limited to:

- Information dissemination via telephone (i.e. automated system, call trees, hotline, etc.)
- Working through community and cultural leaders, such as the Amish and Hispanic populations.
- Establishment of pre-designated locations for information dissemination
- Door-to-door outreach
- Multilingual communications via pre-made factsheets and interpreters on social media sites
- Mailed communications materials, if the situation permits

TCHD communications use people-first language, as defined by the Ohio Department of Health. People-first language is the practice of literally putting "people" ahead of their needs. When communicating about a person/people with access and functional needs:

- Begin with a word that affirms human dignity, e.g. person, individual, population, etc.;
- Follow with a brief statement that respectfully captures the access and functional need

See *Appendix 1 – Communicating with People with Access and Functional Needs*.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal communication within TCHD includes but is not limited to communication between the TCHD staff, the Board of Health, and TCHD administration.

The responsibility to ensure that effective internal communication is a part of TCHD day-to-day operations lies with all individuals who initiate or participate in communication on behalf of TCHD.

Internal communication will be respectful, open and collaborative, and will take into account the confidential nature of specific matters.

Internal communications never stop. It is a continuous interactive process.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External communication includes but is not limited to communication with our community partners, using either health department communication assets or assets requested from the support agency (Tuscarawas County EMA).

All external communications must adhere to the TCHD Branding Policy. See **Attachment II - TCHD Branding Policy**.

COMMUNICATION METHODS

Communications will be accomplished through a combination of communications systems and devices currently used on a day-to-day basis. These include:

- Face-to-face communications
- Phone lines
- Mobile phones
- TCHD 24/7 Staff Call Down Phone Chain
- Email
- TCHD website
- Social media
- Fax machines
- Web-based applications, including the Ohio Public Health Communication System (OPHCS) and WebEOC
- Multi-Agency Radio Communications System (MARCS)
- Amateur (HAM) Radio
- Call Center
- Conference Calls

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION METHODS (PHONE, EMAIL, FAX)

For those agencies/stakeholders who do not utilize OPHCS or MARCS, traditional communication methods will be utilized for information sharing purposes. TCHD maintains a comprehensive Contact List to facilitate contacting internal and external partners as well as local, state and federal agencies.

See *Appendix 2 - TCHD Contact List* for point of contact (POC) information.

TCHD 24/7 PHONE CHAIN CALL-DOWN PROCEDURE

The TCHD call-down list is used for notification and warning of TCHD staff in the case of an impending emergency response situation, for the purposes of warning, mobilization, and deployment. See **Attachment III - TCHD 24/7 Phone Call-Down List Procedure**.

These TCHD call-down lists only employ notifications and warnings to TCHD staff using landline and/or cellular telephones.

These lists are divided into individual TCHD divisions.

Span of control, as set forth in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), is maintained within these lists.

These lists are activated for usage per the guidelines set forth in the **TCHD Emergency Response Plan** and its attachments.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Electronic communication through means such as e-mail, the Internet, websites and social media provide opportunities for interactive, two-way communication and greatly decreases the response time for distribution of information and for receiving feedback. It is important that employees who utilize these forms of communication do so in a responsible and respectful manner to promote and maintain professionalism the TCHD.

It is important to know that electronic communications are public records, unless they are exempt (i.e., medical records, animal bite medical information, and other information protected by HIPAA or classified as protected health information).

EMAIL

Emails are to be saved according to *Appendix 3 - Tuscarawas County Records Retention Schedule Table*.

NOTE: Email communications are not encrypted and thus are not HIPAA compliant. No patient identifier information is to be sent via email.

TCHD WEBSITE

TCHD maintains a website at www.tchdnow.org. This site is available to the public and is used to provide the public with timely information as well as information about the TCHD and the services that we provide.

During emergencies, all postings must be coordinated with the TCHD PIO as part of its Emergency Response Plan. Depending on the incident, publishers may be directed to point to specific social media sites that will serve as the main source(s) of information.

TCHD website has a link to the Spanish-language translated site.

The website also has a section that can be accessed by employees only. This section contains mandatory training information, policies, procedures, forms and other items that may need to be accessed by TCHD employees.

This website is maintained by the Health Commissioner, Health Education and Emergency Preparedness staff. If a TCHD staff member wants something posted on the website, a form is available. See **Annex A - TCHD Social Media Policy and Procedure Plan** for the form and more information.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Tuscarawas County Health Department (TCHD) may utilize social media and social network sites to further enhance communications with various stakeholder organizations in support of agency goals and objectives. This includes the use of social networking to communicate and engage with the general public and partners on upcoming flu clinics and other events, educating the community on various public health topics, notifying the community and partners on recalls, and so forth. In addition, social media can be used to keep the community and partners informed real-time of public health emergencies such as acts of bioterrorism, large scale disease outbreaks, and other public health emergencies.

During emergencies, all social media content and postings must be coordinated with the TCHD PIO as part of its Emergency Response Plan. Depending on the incident, publishers may be directed to point to specific social media sites that will serve as the main source(s) of information.

TCHD maintains only one account for social media. TCHD staff or divisions are not to maintain separate pages. Social media pages are maintained by the Health Commissioner, Health Education and Emergency Preparedness staff.

TCHD staff shall not use personal profiles in participating in any social networking site as representatives of the TCHD!!

All TCHD social networking sites shall adhere to applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies including all applicable County policies.

Freedom of Information Act and e-discovery laws and policies apply to social media content and therefore content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with these laws.

TCHD social networking sites are subject to public records laws.

Employees representing the TCHD via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the TCHD and in accordance with all policies.

TCHD employees may not present themselves as TCHD employees in social networking sites that are deemed non-work related and are of a personal nature.

If a TCHD staff member wants something posted on social media, a form is available. See **Annex A - TCHD Social Media Policy and Procedure Plan** for the form and more information.

BLAST FAX

Information will be released to physicians medical and emergency personnel, or other groups via blast fax. A log will be kept noting the date and time the fax was sent along with what information was released. The log will be kept by the Administrative Assistant or designee.

Using the copier in the Administrative Assistant's Office:

1. On the main menu press fax option on screen
2. Press device address book
3. In the left-hand corner touch drop down box and select fax groups
4. Under names, select what groups you want to send fax to and press add
5. Then touch OK
6. Next screen will give faxing options. If everything is ok to send hit green start button on copier.
7. Depending on how many contacts were sent fax, it will take a while for the confirmation pages to print.

OHIO PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (OPHCS):

OPHCS is a multi-faceted public health notification and warning system. ODH maintains this system, and local health departments manage it locally through their local OPHCS Administrator. TCHD OPHCS Administrator is the Health Commissioner and the PHEP Coordinator.

OPHCS is a license-based system and only a certain number of Tuscarawas County personnel have access, which includes New Philadelphia City Health Department, Union Hospital and Trinity/Twin City Hospitals.

OPHCS allows for notification to multiple organizations and other jurisdictions. For example, staff at other local health departments may be notified via the “Epidemiology-Surveillance” organization to include them in epidemiology incidents.

OPHCS has various alerting levels and notifies each license holder via email and/or telephone (landline and cellular) as designated by the license holder.

OPHCS allows for alerts and notifications to be received from and sent to multiple jurisdictions, including other counties throughout the State of Ohio.

TCHD tests the OPHCS notification system at a minimum, twice per year. In the test, users are reminded to log onto their account to verify their current information and to respond that they have received the message.

TCHD activates this system via the guidelines set forth in **TCHD ERP** and its attachments.

See the *Appendix 4 - Sending an OPHCS Alert* document provided by the NECO Region for step-by-step procedures for sending an OPHCS alert.

WEBEOC

WebEOC is an internet-based incident management system. It is maintained by the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and is used as a means to track and analyze disaster information for better decision making before, during and after incidents.

If the incident is large enough to require information sharing across different agencies, the region or state, WebEOC will be utilized. If TCHD needs a WebEOC incident created, Tuscarawas County EMA will be contacted who will then set up the incident.

Select TCHD response personnel will receive training on WebEOC and its uses. See *Appendix 5 – WebEOC County User’s Manual*.

MULTI-AGENCY RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (MARCS):

The TCHD has 4 MARCS radios which are monitored by the department operator and the Environmental Health Secretary. See **Annex B - MARCS Radio Procedures**.

- Base station in Environmental Health office
 - Portable radios:
 - PHEP Office
 - Front desk
-

AMATUER RADIO (HAM RADIO)

During an emergency, the TCHD Incident Commander may request the use of amateur radio communications. This is beneficial when other means of communications are not possible due to technical problems. This request will go through the TC EMA Office.

CALL CENTER

During an emergency, TCHD may establish a Call Center for the public to use in order to request information. These phone lines will be staffed by personnel designated by the Health Commissioner/PIO or designee, and the public phone number will be released at that time.

NECO CONFERENCE CALL

Another option for communicating with our regional partners is the use of the Northeast Central Ohio (NECO) regional conference call system.

For internal use only:

- Website: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/>
- UserName: cbarker@schd.org
- Password: necoregion5

NECO Communicable Disease & Epidemiology Coordination Conference Call Line

- Website: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/754095109>
 - United States: +1 (224) 501-3212
 - Access Code: 754095109
-

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Tuscarawas County Health Department follows the **TCHD Emergency Response Plan (ERP)** and the **TCHD Public Health Operations Guide (PHOG)** for responding to public health emergencies. See the **TCHD ERP** and its attachments and appendices for detailed emergency response procedures and situations that may define a public health emergency. During an emergency, the Department Operations Center (DOC) will be established. Communications to and from the DOC is further defined in **DOC Activation SOP**.

This **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** operates in concert with ongoing response activities in order to ensure accurate and efficient communication with internal and external partners. When engaged in a response, TCHD will ensure the dissemination of information and maintain communication with the following entities to ensure continuity of response operations:

- Applicable TCHD employees
- TCHD Board of Health
- Tuscarawas County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), as applicable
- Regional Public Health Coordinators
- Regional Healthcare Coordinators
- City, county, state and federal officials
- Non-governmental partners

RISK COMMUNICATIONS

In a crisis or emergency, information voids could possibly be filled by others in the public with erroneous information. It is imperative that clear and accurate information be communicated as early as possible. This is risk, or crisis, communications management.

- Under the ICS structure, the Health Commissioner, or designee of the TCHD shall designate a Lead Public Information Officer (PIO) to coordinate risk communication and information dissemination activities.
- Only the Health Commissioner (or designee) or designated PIO will release information to employees, the media, the public, or government entities.
- Communications will be coordinated in the Department Operations Center (DOC) and/or JIC (if applicable).
- Communications will be documented, recorded, and approved by DOC personnel and under the structure of the Incident Command System.
- The following TCHD staff will approve information before it is released:
 - Incident Commander/Health Commissioner or designee

- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) – will vary according to the nature of the crisis or emergency and level of expertise.
- Public Information Officer

In the case of a multiple agency involvement and JIC activation, then the lead PIO designated by the Emergency Manager at the EOC will release information to the media. The above referenced staff will clear information provided to the JIC for release to the media.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION (EEI)

TCHD communicates essential elements of information (EElS) and other tactical information through the messaging of information to response staff to ensure responders are well informed on the response operation. Key Messages must include:

- Summary of the incident
- Summary of current operations
- Response Lead
- Objectives to be completed by the agency
- Planned public information activities
- Other engaged agencies

See *Appendix 6 - TCHD Essential Elements of Information Requirements*.

METHODS

MESSAGE TEMPLATES

Several Message templates have been developed which can be modified for specific situations. See *Appendix 7 – Message Templates*

- A blank message template
- An all hazards message template for the first minutes after an incident takes place
- An infectious disease outbreak
- A biological terrorism event

TIMING OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

After a public health crisis has been identified, the Lead PIO must be able to:

- Provide basic information to the media and allow for initial questions within one hour of the onset of the emergency.

- Lead PIO must be able to draft a media release and secure approval and publish the media release within two hours of onset of the public health emergency.
- If necessary, a news conference must be conducted within three hours of notification.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)

APPOINTMENT/DUTIES

The Health Commissioner will act as the agency Public Information Officer (PIO), unless otherwise designated by the Incident Commander when ICS is activated. All emergency public information releases will be coordinated by the Health Commissioner/Public Information Officer.

The Lead PIO must be named within one hour of the establishment of incident command by the Incident Commander (health commissioner or designee) and the PIO will report to the IC. Such activities are conducted in concert with the Tuscarawas County Emergency Management Agency (EMA).

PIO activities may include: press briefings, press releases, postings to the Tuscarawas County Health Department's website and social media sites, monitoring of media reports, initiating rumor control.

The PIO for Tuscarawas County Health Department is responsible for maintaining media relationships, creating appropriate public health messages for the public, and managing all communications activities.

The PIO will be responsible for determining which media resources would be most appropriate for the emergency. The following mass media communications resources may be used to disseminate information to the general public. Such information will act either to provide important information to the public regarding preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation purposes on a specific topic, or to provide important public health incident information.

- Television
- Newspapers
- AM/FM radio
- Brochures / flyers
- Hotlines / phone banks / information lines
- TCHD Website and social media

TCHD will ensure that information regarding an incident or event is communicated consistently and reported accurately in the media and to the public in general.

TCHD will be responsive to requests for information from the media and the public and will proactively provide information in response to formal and informal requests.

PIO's will receive specialized training that will enable them to effectively manage their role. The PIO Training Plan (**TCHD MYTEP**), outlines the specific training requirements for agency PIO's.

See *Appendix 8 - PIO & Spokesperson JAS*, for a complete list of PIO job actions.

SPOKESPERSONS

The Health Commissioner or a subject matter expert can be designated (by the Health Commissioner or the PIO) as a spokesperson. When an approved spokesperson responds to a press call, the Health Commissioner will be informed of the inquiry and briefed on the general response. Once an interview is completed, spokesperson should promptly send a brief update via email to the lead PIO (provide reporter's name, media outlet, city, phone number, general topic and any unique questions or responses). Spokesperson should immediately call the Health Commissioner if post-interview concerns are urgent.

See *Appendix 8 – PIO & Spokesperson JAS*, for a complete list of spokesperson job actions.

GUIDELINES

- It shall be the policy of the Tuscarawas County Health Department to seek a professional and courteous relationship with the press and the public at all times.
- All staff shall exhibit an attitude of helpfulness and concern towards persons requesting information regarding health district activities and incidents.
- All staff who receive inquires involving health district emergency response activities shall direct those inquires to the Health Commissioner or his/her designated PIO.
- The PIO shall release only factual information concerning the incident. Personal opinion about the incident shall not be part of the official comments.
- The PIO will be proactive in releasing information to the media and thus to the public.
- During extended emergency response operations, regular updates should be provided. The frequency of the briefings depends on the complexity and scope of the incident. Updates should be provided sooner as information becomes available or any time there are changes in the incident.
- Generally, the PIO should:
 - Establish a plan to brief the media of basic incident information within one hour of the onset of an incident.
 - Draft and secure approval and prepare for publication a media release within two hours of onset of public health emergency.
 - Work with the incident commander to establish a plan to allow for the execution of a news conference within three hours of the public health emergency.

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)

In certain circumstances, such as in the event of large-scale crisis or emergency involving multiple organizations, the Tuscarawas County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the TCHD Department Operations Center (DOC) will be activated. Communication activities are coordinated through a Joint Information Center (JIC). A JIC is a facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. It is the central point of contact for all news media. It is designed to disseminate a variety of information and instructions to interested and affected parties through press briefings, news releases and advisories. Public and news media queries are also coordinated through the JIC.

The designated PIO will facilitate communications via the JIC, coordinate all press inquiries, briefings, interviews, information releases, rumor control activities, and all other media relations functions. If the EOC is activated, all press inquiries to the TCHD shall be referred to and processed via the JIC. All public information is released through the JIC.

Once a JIC is established, the TCHD must:

- Assure that the lead PIO participates in the JIC and serves as a liaison with other organizations
- Assure that the JIC is staffed by a PIO during all operational hours (potentially 24-hours/day)

Important Notes on the JIC:

- After an emergency has been declared, the local Joint Information Center (JIC) will coordinate all public information efforts and media relations activities.
- In the event that a JIC is established, the JIC will be housed near the EOC.
- Every participating response organization with a PIO should send a representative to the JIC.
- Every participating response organization should refer journalists and other media representatives to the JIC, rather than attempt to deal with them directly.
- It may be necessary to make arrangements at the JIC to credential the press and to route lay people who want information.
- At least one JIC representative must be available during all operational periods to report to the incident command or unified command center.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Day to day (non-emergency) communication with the public will take place at all levels within TCHD. Individuals who communicate to the public on behalf of TCHD will make every effort to ensure that the information they are providing is accurate and, in instances of uncertainty, will refer the query to the Health Commissioner. At all times communication with the public, either verbally, written, electronic or in the form of promotional materials, will comply with the Communications Plan.

It shall be the policy of the Tuscarawas County Health Department to seek a professional and courteous relationship with the press and the public at all times.

All staff shall exhibit an attitude of helpfulness and concern towards persons requesting information regarding health district activities and incidents.

All staff who receive inquires involving health district emergency response activities shall direct those inquires to the Health Commissioner or his/her designated PIO.

TCHD employees approached by the media off site, for instance at a conference or press conference conducted by another organization, shall brief the Health Commissioner on the nature of the interview and what statements were made to the reporter. If it is possible to notify the Health Commissioner before an interview is conducted, then every reasonable effort should be made to do so.

Under no circumstances will the home phone number or email address of any staff, volunteer or board member be given to the public without specific authorization from the individual.

All release of information must follow HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules and the following Public Records Policy.

All release of information must follow **TCHD Public Records Policy**. See **Attachment IV - Public Records Policy**.

Information dissemination must also be culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible to special populations when suitable (based on Office of Civil Rights (OCR)). See **Attachment I - Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communications Policy**.

PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR HEALTH INFORMATION AND HEALTH RESOURCES INCLUDING DATA

Health Education staff, working with other staff, are responsible for ensuring that health information and health resources are available within the Health Department for dissemination to the public. Such material will adhere to the **TCHD Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communications Policy**. See **Attachment I - Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communications Policy**.

Health Education staff are primarily responsible for responding to requests for health information and health resources, including health data, however, any staff member may respond to requests if the staff member is knowledgeable of the content area.

Health information, health resources and statistics maintained in the agency include but are not limited to:

- Health statistics
- Community health resources
- Various grants operated by TCHD

Health information, health resources and health statistics accessible in the public domain includes but is not limited to:

- Ohio Department of Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Organizations: American Diabetes Association, America Cancer Association, American Heart Association

Responses to requests may be in various forms including verbal response, follow-up email, and referrals to the agency's website, a wide variety of web links, or to other agencies, distribution of educational materials, in-person interviews, or any combination of these methods.

Pursuant to the Tuscarawas County Health Department Confidentiality Policy and the County's HIPAA policies, all responses to request for health data will be provided as population data and therefore de-identifiable data.

Health data for the county will be available on the Agency's website within the Community Health Assessment documents. Additional links to other health data sources will be available on the site as well.

PUBLIC REQUEST FOR COPIES OF RECORDS

COPY REQUEST POLICY

The charge for paper copies is \$.10 cents per page or the amount required by law. There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of postage and mailing supplies, in addition to the charges set under the costs for public records section.

See **Attachment V – Copy Request Policy and Copy Request Form.**

MEDICAL RECORDS COPY REQUEST POLICY

Ohio law establishes the maximum fees a health care provider or medical records company can charge for copies of a patient's medical record. The law also provides for certain limited situations in which copies of records must be provided without charge – for example, when the records are necessary to support a patient's claim for Social Security disability benefits. The fee schedule is updated annually.

For 2018, the cost for medical record request at TCHD will be as follows:

\$1.25 per page for the first 10 pages; \$0.50 per page for pages 11 through 50; \$0.25 per page for pages 51 and higher

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO

Prior to the photographing, videotaping, filming, audio recording, or otherwise recording the likeness of a patient by the media, a Media Release Form must be completed by the patient or the patient's legal representative and witnessed by a member of the Tuscarawas County Health Department. See *Appendix 9 – Media Release Form.*

Media representatives, including television crews, reporters and photographers, who want to interview, photograph, film, videotape, audiotape or otherwise record the likeness of any person by any means while at a TCHD facility, must be escorted by the Health Commissioner or designee. If a media representative appears at a TCHD facility unescorted, employees should notify the Health Commissioner or designee.

INQUIRIES ABOUT POLICY, BUDGET, LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, PERSONNEL ISSUES OR CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS:

- Refer budget questions to the Health Commissioner's Office.
- Refer questions about department policy to the department supervisor. If the department supervisor is not available, refer the call to the Health Commissioner's Office.
- Refer questions about legislative issue to the Health Commissioner's Office.
- Refer questions about a legal issue to the Health Commissioner's Office.
- Refer questions about personnel matters, to Health Commissioner. If Health Commissioner is not available, refer the call to Administrative Assistant.
- If you are dealing with a particularly controversial issue, please consult with the Health Commissioner or designee about the proper response.
- The Health Commissioner or designee will send the release to Board of Health members and other organizations potentially impacted by the release.

TCHD EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL FILES

Each employee has only one universal personnel file.

An employee's personnel file contains only necessary job-related information (e.g., hiring records, position description, performance records).

Records that are maintained separately from the personnel file (medical records, investigatory records, and attorney-client privileged communications) are not part of the personnel record.

Records maintained in a personnel file are generally considered public records under Ohio law. When a public records request is made, documents or information such as social security numbers, home addresses, personal phone numbers, and employee ID numbers may require redaction or withholding pursuant to law.

Some records contained in personnel files or otherwise maintained by TCHD are not public records, including but not limited to, medical and educational records, intellectual property records, and any other records made confidential by law.

MEDIA SPEAKING GUIDELINES

- Make sure that reporter's calls are returned promptly.
- Prepare for the interview.
- Avoid bureaucratic language, jargon and acronyms; explain in layman's terms.
- Explain complex programs in simple, human terms.

- Give facts, not opinions or speculation.
- Don't comment about things outside of your area of expertise.
- Never lie.
- Stay on the record.
- Never say "no comment." If you can't answer a question, tell the reporter why.
- Never be condescending.
- Be patient.
- Never be argumentative, confrontational or lose your temper with a reporter.

TCHD COMMUNICATIONS PLAN RESOURCES

ATTACHMENT I – LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POLICY

ATTACHMENT II – BRANDING POLICY

ATTACHMENT III – TCHD 24/7 CALL DOWN PROCEDURE

ATTACHMENT IV – TCHD PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY.

ATTACHMENT V – COPY REQUEST POLICY AND COPY REQUEST FORM

APPENDIX 1 – COMMUNICATING WITH AND ABOUT INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS POLICY

APPENDIX 2 – TCHD CONTACT LIST

APPENDIX 3 – TUSCARAWAS COUNTY RECORDS RETENTION TABLE

APPENDIX 4 – SENDING AN OPHCS ALERT

APPENDIX 5 – WEBEOC COUNTY USER’S MANUAL

APPENDIX 6 – ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION (EEI)

APPENDIX 7 – MESSAGE TEMPLATES

APPENDIX 8 – PIO & SPOKESPERSON JOB ACTION SHEETS

APPENDIX 9 – MEDIA RELEASE FORM

ANNEX A – SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ANNEX B – MARCS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ANNEX C – DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS CENTER ACTIVATION SOP

APPROVED ABBREVIATIONS LIST

DOC	Health Department Operations Center
EI	Essential Elements of Information
EOC	EMA Emergency Operations Center
ERF	Emergency Response Function
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
HAM	Amateur Radio
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act
ID	Identification
JAS	Job Action Sheet
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
MARCS	Multi-Agency Radio Communications System
NECO	North East Central Ohio Health and Planning Region
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NPCHD	New Philadelphia City Health Department
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
ODH	Ohio Department of Health
OPHCS	Ohio Public Health Communications System
PHEP	Public Health Emergency Preparedness
PHOG	Public Health Operations Guide
PIO	Public Information Officer
POC	Point of Contact
SOP	Standard Operations Procedures – also known as Standard Operations Guidelines
TC EMA	Tuscarawas County Emergency Management Agency
TCHD	Tuscarawas County Health Department