

DRAFT: Internet Contact Tracing



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Background



- Historically, partner notification requires ADPH to contact sex and needle sharing partners of infected individuals and other individuals that may be at risk for contracting and transmitting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) to arrange personal meetings with those partners and the disease intervention specialist (DIS)

Purpose



- Informing them of their exposure
- Arrange for testing
- Treat those infected with an STI
- Obtain information on partners or others in need of testing/treatment
- Refer those diagnosed with HIV to an infectious disease provider
- Provide linkages to HIV/AIDS care and social service organizations
- Conduct risk reduction counseling



GET TESTED FOR SYPHILIS

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- Traditionally STI contacts with locating information (i.e. phone number, address or other marginal contact information) are initiated for field investigation and partner notification
- Development and use of internet chat rooms and e-mail as a dating and social network tools to meet sex partners and establish relationships challenges ADPH to seek more effective means of partner notification

Logic



- Because of the rapidly changing dynamic, it is necessary to create policy and practice for IPN that is consistent with the evolving method of communicating and establishing relationships
- Failure to modify our partner notification technique will result in increased spread of STIs

Rationale



- *E-mail is a secure form of communication with an individual
- All Internet based communication must include who and where the e-mail is from, including the official state program name, the name and credentials of the DIS, and the specific division
- Given the anonymous nature of the internet, ultimately it's the patient/partner's choice as to how they would like to be notified of the specific disease they may have been exposed to

Limitation: The Division of STD does not have authorization to access adult website for e-mail contact tracing

Notification



- During the interview with the original patient, DIS will inform the client that services are available to notify partners on their behalf or to assist in doing their own partner notification either in person or by e-mail. DIS will obtain the following information:
 - E-mail contact information (i.e. tloj1@mfm.com)
 - Websites/ISPs which are being used to meet partners
 - Obtain identifying information on partners and suspects, if available, that will help to ensure the information is provided to the right person (date of birth, age, height etc.)
 - Obtain meeting locations
 - DIS should ask if there are privacy issues that may be related to e-mail address (i.e. is the e-mail account shared by more than one person and their relationship to the individual)
 - Any other information that would be helpful in notifying the contact (i.e. will the contact be gone for six months, infrequent use of e-mail, more than one e-mail address or other internet names)

Procedures



- DIS will maintain a log for each case requiring IPN (Attachment A)
- All program managers (PM) will supervise and perform quality control and assurance on all IPN activities
- DIS with cases requiring IPN will be required to check their voice-mail and e-mail at the beginning and end of each business day, and/or to arrange for backup coverage
- If a DIS uses vacation, sick, or personal time the PM will assume their IPN responsibility

E-Mail Protocol



- The initial e-mail (Attachment B) may only be sent Monday through Thursday. **At no time will IPN be initiated on a Friday**
- DIS will record in the IPN Log Book all required information. Program managers will be responsible for verifying log book accuracy monthly
- **All e-mails will be sent from an ADPH or CHD mail account. All e-mail will be blind carbon copy (bcc) to the PM**
- **DIS will request notification of receipt of all sent emails**

Attachment B: Notification Letter



- Dear _____,
- You are requested to come to the _____ County Health Department,
Name of County
- _____,
Address Day Date
- At _____ am/pm.
Time
- ***This is a matter that concerns your personal health. If for any reason you are unable to keep this appointment, please call me or a representative from my department at _____.***
Telephone#
- *Thank you,*
- *DIS Name, Credentials*
- *Division of STD Prevention*
- *xxxxxxxxxx, AL*

E-Mail Protocol



- At a minimum three attempts will be made to contact the partner(s) or suspect(s)
- Two working days should elapse prior to sending of any subsequent e-mail to partner(s) or suspect(s). DIS will add the statement (Second Attempt or Third Attempt) to all e-mail if no response after the initial attempt
- Documentation of attempt to contact a partner(s), suspect(s), and associate(s) by e-mail on FR should include date, time, replies or lack of reply
- If the partner(s), suspect(s) or associate(s) e-mails you back for information about the message do not supply any health related information. Only stress the urgency and need to protect confidentiality for a face-to-face meeting or via phone or if out-of-state provide contact information to out-of-state health department

E-Mail Protocol



- DIS will record all e-mail correspondence on FRs, the notes section of STD*MIS and the IPN log book. The documented information should include the date and time e-mail was received
- The same restrictions that apply for contacting a client, partner, or suspect by phone apply to e-mail contacts per STD Field Manual. The same confidentiality rules of protecting the original patient apply for sending an e-mail message as apply to traditional PN over the phone
- At times, a combined notification is appropriate, when the original patient (OP) e-mails their partner prior to the ADPH DIS contacting the client, but this is rare
- If there is no response after one week, the case should be reviewed with the PM to determine what further action, if any, should be taken

Response Guidelines



- Be sure to check voicemails at the beginning and end of each business day
- Identify yourself and your reason for calling (i.e. “*Someone you had sexual contact with was concerned about you and wanted you to know you may have been exposed to an infectious disease*”)
- Determine whether the individual would like you to follow-up with him/her regarding confirmation of STI screening and treatment. If the partner(s) or suspect(s) is willing to give their name and number, arrange a time when you’ll be calling them to follow-up
- As a service, you can offer to call the individuals medical care provider to explain the situation and facilitate preventive treatment or ask if you can provide a schedule or referral to a medical provider

Documentation Requirements



- The DIS will document all IPN activity
- DIS must document all work with the date, time and description of each interaction on the IPN Log Sheet
- All e-mail documentation should be kept in the case file
- IPN activity must be entered and kept up-to-date in STD*MIS (see below)

Documentation in STD*MIS Data Base



- Individuals who are only known by their screen name are entered into STD*MIS as: Internet, screen name (For example, Internet, Sexyperson.) Both the first and last names should be updated when more information becomes available
- Screen names are entered into the also known as (AKA) section. AKAs should never be changed or deleted. New screen names must be added as needed. (It is important to note that individuals can be searched for in STD*MIS by their AKA only- no other information about first or last names is needed to perform a search.) If the individual is not currently in the STD*MIS system, we can add them and open a new Field Record

Documentation in STD*MIS Data Base



- Screen names pertain to specific internet sites. These sites (Manhunt, AIM, Yahoo, etc)
- Must be noted in the notes section of the field record. Individuals may change their screen names frequently, so it is essential that the date of the last known use of the screen name be noted in the notes section. (For example: MH “Sexyperson” 4/19/06, Yahoo “SexyP” 4/19/05, AIM “SexyPER” 4/19/04.)

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Documentation in STD*MIS Data Base



- The way missing locating information is managed will remain the same. For example, if we know a client's first name and address, this individual is entered into the system as "John Unk". Now, with this new system for entering names into STD*MIS, sexual contacts will be entered into the system as "internet, screen name," or, if we know the client's first name, "John Internet."
- STD*MIS does not allow numbers to be entered after letter codes; this can be noted in the case file. Case dispositions should be entered into STD*MIS

Questions

