

Maximizing Texting as a Diversion and Outreach Tool

COVID-19 Inquiry Text Messaging Template (English)

Thank you for reaching out.

If you have questions or concerns about COVID-19, including symptoms, testing, financial assistance, prevention, and travel recommendations **REPLY WITH “COVID” NOW**

For all other inquiries, **PLEASE REPLY WITH “HELP” NOW**

COVID

- If you have questions about the symptoms of COVID-19, please press 1
- If you have questions about how to get tested or when and how to receive medical care if you are ill, press 2
- If you lost income because of COVID-19 and have questions about financial assistance, press 3
- If you have questions about how COVID-19 is transmitted, including information about prevention, press 4
- For information about travel restrictions, press 5

1

Symptoms may appear between 2 to 14 days after exposure and can range from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms include: fever, a cough, and shortness of breath. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, avoid contact with others and reach out to your medical provider.

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. These emergency signs include; trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to wake someone, and blue-ish lips or face.

For more detailed information on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

2

Not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19. **If** you have symptoms, which include coughing, fever and body aches and want to get tested, try calling your medical provider or **[your state or local health department]** at **[phone number here]**. Test supplies are increasing, but it may still be difficult to quickly obtain testing.

If you feel ill, please stay away from others as much as possible and contact your medical provider.

If you do not have a regular medical provider, reply with “MEDICAL” to find your nearest community clinic.

3

Anyone who has lost income because of COVID-19 can apply for unemployment benefits through the state . Start the process by searching this link:

www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/UnemploymentBenefits/find-unemployment-benefits.aspx?newsearch=true

Information about applying for food stamps can be found here:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>

You may have heard about a bill passed in Congress which would send direct payments to individuals and families as part of a support and stimulus package. Be aware that if you receive any texts or emails telling you how to get this money, it is likely a scam that should be ignored. Payment distribution has not been finalized but will likely be related to how you obtain your IRS tax refund from 2018 or 2019. Check back for details.

If you have questions specific to help with rent or mortgages, utilities, getting food immediately or other questions, reply with the word "HELP".

4

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person; either between people who are within about 6 feet of one another or through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Although this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, it is still recommended to disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

For more detailed information on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

5

Generally speaking, unnecessary travel is discouraged either within the country or internationally.

COVID-19 has been reported in many states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease.

Crowded travel settings, like airports, also increase your risk of COVID-19 exposure.

For more detailed information on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

HELP

Recommendations:

- Direct inquirers with common questions into pathways/protocols you have already built into your system;

OR

- Direct inquirers to an agent to help them find specific referrals

Information Push-Text Recommended: A 6-Week Cadence (or pattern)

We recommend two cadence options:

(1) Once a week (on Mondays) or (2) Twice a week (on Mondays and Thursdays).

The intervals and messages highlighted in yellow are “Core Messages” and should be used for the weekly “Monday Messaging”.

Add important local updates at least once per week. Suggested push notifications could include the following:

- Updates on business, government or school closures in your area
- Changes or updates on meal distribution sites from schools, from Meals on Wheels, or from the local food bank
- Updates on testing locations and our hours
- Availability of government benefits such as stimulus checks, DSNAP, or foreclosure/eviction prevention resources
- Changes in business hours for shopping/travel/essential services
- State Unemployment Office hours/services updates (these services seemed to be clogged right now and causing a lot of anxiety)
- Any other relevant updates from news briefings with your local health department or elected officials office

Interval	Message
1st Monday	<p>Want tips for keeping safe at home, school, work and commercial establishments? Here is a simple reference: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf</p>
1st Thursday	<p>If you have lost income because of COVID-19, you can apply for unemployment through the state by starting here: www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/UnemploymentBenefits/find-unemployment-benefits.aspx?newsearch=true</p>
2nd Monday	<p>Need to know the straight facts about COVID-19? Here they are! https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-h.pdf</p>
2nd Thursday	<p>If you have lost income because of COVID-19, you could qualify for food stamps. Check here to learn about requirements and how to apply: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility</p>
3rd Monday	<p>Generally speaking, unnecessary travel is discouraged either within the country or internationally.</p> <p>COVID-19 has been reported in many states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease.</p> <p>Crowded travel settings, like airports, also increase your risk of COVID-19 exposure.</p>
3rd Thursday	<p>Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection with ordinary household cleaner is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.</p>
4th Monday	<p>Myth: I need to stockpile as many groceries as I can. Fact: Please only buy what your family needs for a week. It is important to remember that many other families may be unable to buy food and water for weeks in advance. Consumer demand has recently been exceptionally high – especially for grocery, household cleaning, and some healthcare products. Freight flows are not disrupted, but stores need time to restock. More myths and facts here: https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus-rumor-control</p>
4th Thursday	<p>Based upon available information, individuals at high-risk from COVID-19 include: Anyone aged 65 years and older, and especially those living in a nursing home or long-term care facility. Other high-risk conditions include: anyone living with chronic lung disease or asthma, or anyone with a compromised immune system. However, serious illness</p>

	including death has been recorded in all age groups. Be careful for your own sake and for the sake of those around you.
5th Monday	This site provides current information about COVID-19 cases in the US. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html
5th Thursday	Can spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body kill the COVID-19 virus? No. Spraying alcohol or chlorine will not kill viruses that have already entered your body. Spraying such substances can be harmful to clothes or mucous membranes (i.e. your eyes and mouth). Both alcohol and chlorine <i>can</i> be used to disinfect surfaces under appropriate recommendations. More information from the World Health Organization here: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters
6th Monday	At-home testing is not available for COVID-19. Do not fall prey to scams or telemarketers that try to sell you a test. Check out the CDC website for testing updates or call your physician directly. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/index.html
6th Thursday	Parenting in the time of COVID-19 To help parents interact constructively with their children during this time of confinement, these six one-page tips for parents feature planning one-on-one time, staying positive, creating a daily routine, avoiding bad behavior, managing stress, and talking about COVID-19. Use these to help you and your kids, and have fun doing so. https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting