

Online Social Networks to the Rescue!: Fulfilling the Ten Essential Public Health Services

Melanie D. Mason and Dr. Maureen P. Bezold, Western Illinois University

Ten Essential Public Health Services:

The ten essential public health services provide a framework for the responsibilities of public health departments. Although the fulfillment of these services is vital, health departments face many obstacles including budget cuts and a reduced workforce that interfere with service delivery. To account for these obstacles, health departments must find innovative ways to deliver these services.

Purpose of our Study:

Explore the integration and utilization of online social networks within state health departments (SHDs) to determine if they can serve as a low-resource tool for SHDs in fulfilling the ten essential public health services.

Method:

Twitter was selected as the data collection tool. Twitter pages belonging to 42 SHDs were analyzed retrospectively. A total of 2,424 tweets were recorded. A stratified random sample was distributed to current and former public health professionals to analyze the content of the posts.

Results:

Although all of the essential services were represented at least once, 44.6% of posts related to essential service three, which is to educate, inform, and empower individuals. Examples of tweets that represent each essential service can be found in the figure below.

<u>Essential Service</u>	<u>Observed Tweet</u>
ES 1: Monitor Health Status	Whooping cough making record comeback here and nationally.
ES 2: Diagnose and Investigate	How to tell between a cold and the flu. Check out this website.
ES 3: Inform, Educate, and Empower	Every time you eat, drink at least an 8-ounce glass of water.
ES 4: Mobilize Partnerships	Want to volunteer for emergencies/events? The Rocky Mt Medical Reserve Corps could be your answer.
ES 5: Develop Policies and Plans	ADH receives Blue and You Foundation grant to improve stroke care.
ES 6: Enforce Laws to Ensure Safety	Governor is joining others to announce responsible gun safety legislation at 10am.
ES 7: Link People to Health Services	Free flu shot clinics will be open to the public from 1-4pm Wednesday.
ES 8: Assure Competent Workforce	New job opening. See link.
ES 9: Evaluate Health Services	With 600 people on the organ donation waiting list in Delaware, we need to change the equation.
ES 10: Research Health Problems	Report on Research: Selling food: Food marketing to children and teens is a public health concern. Read it here.

Implications:

During a time characterized by shortages in the workforce and budget cuts, the integration of online social networks in the services delivered by health departments should be expanded, even beyond purposes of health education.