



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van T. Mitchell, Secretary

State Health Improvement Process – Survey - Newsletter

Office of Population Health Improvement, Public Health Services

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Background

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) seeks to provide a framework for accountability, local action, and public engagement to advance the health of Maryland residents. The Maryland DHMH uses the State Health Improvement Process (SHIP) to achieve this goal. The SHIP comprises of a website that captures data for 39 measures that represent what it means for Maryland to be healthy. Communications about the SHIP (e.g., data, trainings, major events), currently are most robust through the website and SHIP newsletter.

In 2016, Maryland DHMH conducted a brief survey on customer satisfaction with SHIP communications. The survey sought to identify areas of improvement for SHIP's: 1) website and 2) newsletter. Findings from this survey contributed to multiple quality improvement projects for SHIP.

This report captures the survey's findings pertaining to the SHIP newsletter.

Methods

A set of survey questions was developed to focus this research. The questions were uploaded to Survey Monkey. Over half a dozen people piloted the survey questions. Areas of improvement were identified and applied to the final survey. The final survey tool consisted of 22 questions (Appendix). The SHIP newsletter and Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) email lists comprised of the list of contacts. The survey was emailed to this list of contacts, posted on the SHIP website, included as an article in the SHIP newsletter, and advertised in the signature line of the SHIP email address. Further, survey messaging stated that the "survey can be shared with anyone else interested in improving SHIP." The survey was open for two weeks.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to identify themes across responses. The newsletter and website sections were analyzed in separate reports.

Results

A total of 217 respondents participated in the SHIP survey's two sections on the website and newsletter (Table 1). The response rate is estimated at 20%. Most respondents worked at local health departments (44.6%, Table 1). Respondents represented all regions of Maryland and 19 of 24 counties. The top jurisdictions represented include: Baltimore City, Carroll County, and Wicomico County (22.4%, 10.4%, and 9.0%, respectively, Table 1). The top work types include: other, health educator, agency leadership, public health nurse, and behavioral health staff (34.5%, 19.0%, 16.9%, and 14.8%, respectively, Table 1).

The survey portion on the SHIP newsletter was initiated by 217 respondents and completed in full by 145 respondents (Table 1). The questions outlined areas of the SHIP newsletter, including: use and utility, readability, timeliness, impact, and areas for improvement. Most survey respondents had seen the SHIP newsletter (88.48%, Table 3). Of these respondents, most reported being either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the newsletter (91.72%, Table 3). Nearly half of respondents reported to read the newsletter weekly (49.66%, Table 3) and the other half either every two weeks or once a month (22.76% and 23.45%, respectively, Table 3).

Newsletter items, ranked from most to least important were: events, webinars, research, news, funding opportunities, and monthly health observations. Most respondents suggested that the length of item descriptions is appropriate (87.59%, Table 3). Respondents suggested that item descriptions are easy to read and relevant to respondents’ field of practice (91.72% and 77.93%, respectively, Table 3). Respondents differed in opinion on article timeliness: 62% agreed, 33% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5% disagreed. This element of the newsletter was marked by multiple respondents as an ideal area for improvement, particularly timeliness for funding opportunities.

Most respondents used newsletter content to inform actions that seek to improve public health (68.28%, Table 3). Around half reported registering for and attending featured events and webinars, while fewer applied for featured funding opportunities (46.90%, 66.21%, and 22.07%, respectively, Table 3). Over half of respondents selected “not applicable” for area of improvement (56.55%). Those who selected otherwise picked: funding opportunities (13.79%), recent research and studies (11.72%), and national and Maryland-specific news (11.72%, Table 3). Respondents were closely split on frequency at which they want to receive the newsletter: weekly, every two weeks, and monthly (31.72%, 33.79%, 30.34%, respectively, Table 3). Finally, participants were asked if they would be interested in submitting items for the newsletter and about half of participants responded either “yes” or “maybe” (13.99 and 38.46%, respectively, Table 3).

Discussion

Stakeholders of the SHIP newsletter provided quality feedback on multiple aspects of the newsletter. First, it is important to note that survey findings may be non-representative of Maryland’s public health community. Respondents disproportionately represented local health departments. Additionally, while most Maryland counties were represented (all but 5), Baltimore City, Carroll County, and Wicomico County had the greatest number of respondents.

The most frequently cited area for improvement was the timeliness of article items. Currently, the SHIP newsletter publishes articles with deadlines (e.g., registration), at minimum, one week in advance of deadline. Based on survey findings, this deadline shall be extended to two weeks. Another major finding of the survey had to do with frequency of dissemination and viewership. Currently, the SHIP newsletter is disseminated on a weekly basis. Half of respondents report to read the newsletter weekly. Respondents evenly report that they want to receive the newsletter: weekly, every two weeks, and monthly. Based on findings, the newsletter should be disseminated weekly or every two weeks.

Regarding newsletter content, some respondents asked for a closer tie-in with SHIP activities and initiatives. One person noted that the newsletter accomplished this when it was first created but has since strained to a list of training opportunities, while others said they want as many educational and training opportunities as possible. Readers praised the variety of items, but also noted interest in: requests for proposals (“call for papers”), opportunities to present research at events or publish in journals, recent public health research, Maryland public health policy, the all-payer model, SIM grants, tobacco, and environmental health. Events and webinars will continue to be high priority items. A few respondents commented on the overall layout of the newsletter, commenting that it could be improved and made to be easier to read. Suggestions from respondents provide many improvement actions.

The SHIP Survey’s findings concerning the SHIP newsletter are outlined below. Paired with each finding is an improvement action(s) and timeframe for completion.

Summary SHIP Newsletter Survey Findings & Areas for Improvement		
Finding/ lesson learned	Improvement action	Timeframe
Currently, the SHIP newsletter is disseminated weekly. Respondents want to receive the newsletter either weekly or every two weeks.	The SHIP newsletter will continue to be disseminated weekly. During times when newsletter submissions or resources are limited, the SHIP newsletter may be distributed every two weeks.	Not applicable
Newsletter items, ranked from most to least important were: events, webinars, research, news, funding opportunities, and monthly health observations. Top areas of improvement included articles on: funding opportunities, recent research and studies, and national and Maryland-specific news.	Increase priority of newsletter articles on: events, webinars, news (Maryland-specific), funding opportunities, and recent research/ call for papers. Include articles that address: SHIP, tobacco, environmental health, Maryland public health policy, the all-payer model, and SIM grants. Decrease priority of newsletter articles on monthly health observances.	Ongoing
The length of item descriptions is appropriate.	Length shall remain similar if not the same.	Not applicable
Item descriptions are easy to read and understand.	Reading level shall remain similar if not the same.	Not applicable
An improvement area is timeliness of articles (i.e., funding opportunities). Currently, articles are sent one week of deadline.	This deadline shall be extended to two weeks.	11/1/16
The newsletter layout could be improved and made to be easier to read.	Implement a design that is both computer and mobile-friendly.	11/1/16
About half of respondents may or do have an interest in submitting articles.	Employ a submission process with standardized guidelines. Share submission guidelines with other offices in DHMH, local health departments, local health improvement coalitions, etc.	11/1/16

Appendix. Survey Tool (Questions)

#	Question	SHIP topic
1.	Have you seen the SHIP Health Action Newsletter?	Newsletter
2.	What can we do to encourage you to sign up and/or read the newsletter? You can sign up by emailing us at: dhmh.marylandship@maryland.gov	Newsletter
3.	What is your overall satisfaction with the newsletter?	Newsletter
4.	How often do you read our newsletter?	Newsletter
5.	Please rank each part of the newsletter in order of importance to you. (1= most important, 6= least important)	Newsletter
6.	Regarding the newsletter's content, please rate your agreement level with the following statements.	Newsletter
7.	Regarding the impact of the content featured in the newsletter, please rate your agreement level with the following statements.	Newsletter
8.	What aspect(s) of the newsletter do you think need(s) most improvement? Under "Comments" please explain why and how we can improve or state "N/A" if no need for improvement.	Newsletter
9.	How often would you like to receive our newsletter?	Newsletter
10.	Would you be interested in providing content for this newsletter? If you selected "Yes", we welcome you to email us to learn more about how to do so: dhmh.marylandship@maryland.gov	Newsletter
11.	Have you seen the SHIP Website?	Website
12.	What can we do to encourage you to visit and/or utilize the SHIP website? You can view the website at: http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/Pages/home.aspx	Website
13.	Please rate the website's organization.	Website
14.	Have you used the SHIP website to access...	Website
15.	If you have accessed the SHIP website's data or best practices, for what purpose(s)? Under "Comments" please indicate why not if you haven't or state "N/A" if not applicable.	Website
16.	Did you know that you can have any SHIP webpage translated into over 100 languages to address linguistic barriers?	Website
17.	Did you know that you can view any SHIP webpage in a larger font for increased visibility to address visual barriers?	Website
18.	Which of the following areas of improvement are among your highest priorities? Please elaborate below.	Website
19.	What other ways of presenting SHIP data would be helpful for your work? Please elaborate below.	Website
20.	Please enter below your information. This information will help us understand what organizations and what positions utilize SHIP communications. This question is not mandatory.	Other
21.	Please provide additional information about your organization or office. What sector, focus area, or field within public health is most relevant to your work?	Other
22.	Please enter any additional comments or suggestions regarding SHIP communications below.	Other

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics	
	Response
Respondents	
TOTAL	217 (n)
SHIP Newsletter questions (initiated)	100%
SHIP Website questions (initiated)	70.5%
Workplace	
Local health department	44.6%
Health care organization (e.g., hospital, health clinic)	20.3%
State health department (DHMH)	8.1%
Other (e.g., academia, county government)	27.0%
Baltimore City	22.4%
Carroll County	10.4%
Wicomico County	9.0%
Other counties (all others represented except Caroline, Kent, Prince George's, Somerset, and St. Mary's)	58.2%
Work Type	
Other (please specify)	34.5%
Health educator	19.0%
Agency leadership	16.9%
Public health nurse	14.8%
Behavioral health staff	7.7%
Business and financial operations staff	7.0%
Epidemiologist/Statistician	7.0%
Public health informatics specialist	7.0%
Public information specialist	7.0%
Quality improvement specialist	7.0%
Office and administrative support	5.6%
Public health physician	4.9%
Preparedness staff	4.9%
Nutritionist	3.5%
Nurse Practitioner	2.8%
Oral health professional	1.4%
Physician Assistant	0.7%
Environmental health worker	0.7%
Laboratory worker	0.0%

Table 3. Findings

#	Question	Answer Options	Response
1.	Have you seen the SHIP Health Action Newsletter?	Yes	88.48%
		No	11.52%
2.	What can we do to encourage you to sign up and/or read the newsletter?	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not know there was one. • Did not know where to sign up. • Please sign me up. 	
3.	What is your overall satisfaction with the newsletter?	Very satisfied	56.55%
		Somewhat satisfied	35.17%
		Neutral	6.90%
		Somewhat dissatisfied	1.38%
		Very dissatisfied	0.0%
		Comment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes too short of notice on events and webinars. • Great updates from around the state. • Need a system for DHMH to submit to SHIP. • More interactive engagement with community. 	
4.	How often do you read our newsletter?	Weekly	49.66%
		Every two weeks	22.76%
		Once a month	23.45%
		Once a quarter	2.76%
		Once every six months	0.00%
		Rarely if ever	1.38%
5.	Please rank each part of the newsletter in order of importance to you.	Events	1
		Webinars	2
		Funding Opportunities	5
		Research	3
		News	4
		Health Observances	6
6.	Regarding the newsletter's content, please rate your agreement level with the following statements.	"Items are relevant to my field"	
		Agree	77.93%
		Disagree	0.69%
		"Items with deadlines are published in a timely fashion."	
		Agree	62.07%
		Disagree	4.83%
		"The length of item descriptions is appropriate."	
		Agree	87.59%
		Disagree	1.38%
		"Item descriptions are easy to read and understand."	
		Agree	91.72%
		Disagree	1.38%
		Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good job providing a 'skimmable' digest. • Provides the right amount of information. • I enjoy the wide variety of topics included. 	

7.	Regarding the impact of the content featured in the newsletter, please rate your agreement level with the following statements.	"I have registered for and attended a featured event."	Agree	46.90%		
			Disagree	33.79%		
		"I have registered for and attended a featured event."	Agree	66.21%		
			Disagree	20.69%		
		"I have applied for featured funding opportunities."	Agree	22.07%		
			Disagree	54.48%		
		"I have used content to inform actions that seek to improve public health."	Agree	68.28%		
			Disagree	10.34%		
		8.	What aspect(s) of the newsletter do you think need(s) most improvement? Please example or state "N/A".	Upcoming Events (Conferences, Trainings)		9.66%
				Upcoming Webinars		8.28%
Funding Opportunities				13.79%		
Recent Research, Studies				11.72%		
United States, Maryland News Items				11.72%		
Monthly Health Observances				6.21%		
Not Applicable				56.55%		
Comments:						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources and toolkits to support awareness activities. • Minimum two weeks before a deadline in order to register and share with local audiences, especially for funding opportunities. • More SHIP initiatives or tie-in with SHIP. • More Maryland-specific information issues. • Newsletter was initially a teaching tool but now it is a list of data and webinars. • More about how All-Payer Model and SIM work relates to population health. • More environmental health and tobacco-related issues. 					
9.	How often would you like to receive our newsletter?	Weekly		31.72%		
		Every two weeks		33.79%		
		Monthly		30.34%		
		Once a quarter		1.38%		
		Other - Response Required		2.76%		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly or biweekly. • More frequently if there is a health issue that needs to be disseminated rapidly. 				
10.	Would you be interested in providing content for this newsletter?	Yes		13.99%		
		No		47.55%		
		Maybe		38.46%		