Communications Team
401 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 1300
Seattle, WA 98104-1818
206-296-4600 Fax 206-296-0166
TTY Relay: 711
www.kingcounty.gov/health

Public Health
Seattle & King County

What Our Public Wants from Public Health Text Messages

Overview: In order to better understand the communication preferences and practices of the population we serve, we conducted a telephone survey with King County residents about texting and mobile technology habits, feelings about receiving messages from the health department, and willingness to sign up for and receive emergency text messages.

Method/Participants: We developed a 28-question telephone survey and surveyed 402 King County residents via random digit dialing. Surveys were conducted on land lines and mobile phones.

Results:
Most residents would trust messages from Public Health: A majority of the participants (62.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would trust messages that came from the health department.

Residents vary on their willingness to receive different types of texts: The table below shows the percentage of participants who said that they were likely to sign up to receive the following types of text messages from Public Health.

Message topic	Percent of participants who are very likely or likely to sign up to receive messages on that topic
Emergencies	83%
General health information	24%
Entertaining health messages	9%
Personalized health tips	20%
How to prepare for emergencies	46%

Recommendations: Understanding what audiences want in a texting program is critical, particularly because individuals must opt in to a texting program before they can start to receive text messages. Findings suggest that marketing campaigns should promote text message alerts for emergencies, a topic with widespread interest. Marketing messages with phrases like "have information at your fingertips in case of a dangerous situation" and "receive texts with critical information for your safety to store right in you phone" will appeal to a wide audience.

www.kingcounty.gov/health/texting