

Title	Communication		
Reviewed Date		Number	A2.040
Revised Date	November 15, 2006	Approved Date	June 26, 1996

Introduction

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is a publicly funded agency mandated to promote and protect the public's health and to prevent disease and injury.

The provincial government, local municipalities, community agencies and planning bodies, the people of Simcoe County and The District of Muskoka, and health unit staff all have a stake in the decisions of the Board of Health and the activities of the health unit.

The Board of Health is committed to communicating openly and honestly with its stakeholders in order to engage them in discussions and decisions regarding public health priorities for Simcoe and Muskoka and to ensure the public have the information they need to support health choices.

Legislative Authority

N/A

Policy Definitions and Interpretations

N/A

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform Board of Health members, health unit employees and the public of the principles and parameters for Board of Health communications and media relations.

Policy

The Board of Health will have systems in place to communicate in a timely and effective manner with its stakeholders. Communications will be consistent with the Mission and Strategic Directions of the health unit and appropriate, in content and design, to the target audience.

Meetings of the Board of Health are open to the public with the exception of discussions that relate to the following matters which will be held in-camera in accordance with Board of Health Bylaw 2005-04-01:

- the security of the property of the Board;
- personal matters about an identifiable individual, including health unit employees;
- a proposal or pending acquisition of real property for Board purposes;
- labour relations or employee negotiations;
- litigation or potential litigation affecting the Board;
- advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege including communications necessary for that purpose; or

- a matter that can be considered in private under the authority of another Act.

The Chairperson of the Board of Health and the Medical Officer of Health or designates shall be the authorized spokespersons for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Board members are encouraged to communicate approved Board activities with their respective councils and communities.

Directors and program managers may publicly discuss board approved respective program activities but they shall not speak officially on behalf of the Board of Health without authorization by the Medical Officer of Health.

Procedures

A. Board of Health Meetings, Agenda and Minutes

1. The board of health meeting schedule for the year is posted to the health unit website and shared with the media.
2. The approved board of health meeting agenda is posted to the health unit website two days prior to the meeting date.
3. To support public attendance, arrangements for teleconference attendance to the meeting from either the Gravenhurst or Barrie Office will be made upon request.
4. Copies of approved minutes and materials of board meetings shall be made available on request to any municipality or citizen within the Health Unit jurisdiction. Approved minutes and materials are also posted to the health unit website.

B. Media Relations

1. Media releases highlighting board of health decisions will be drafted based upon direction from the Board of Health and reviewed and approved by the Medical Officer of Health and Board Chair or designate prior to distribution.
2. The Medical Officer of Health acts as the Board of Health's agent in the preparation and presentation of the following public relations information:
 - a. Annual publication of the names of Board members, their status within the Board and the areas they represent.
 - b. The publication of Annual Reports.
 - c. Board communiqués highlighting key issues discussed and decisions made at board meetings. Board bulletins are sent to all media channels (and Board of Health members) the day of or day following the board meeting and are posted to the health unit website.
3. Board of Health members will be notified via e-mail of all media releases in order to enhance their knowledge of agency programming and public health issues and to support them in responding to questions from their stakeholders regarding public health programs and services.

Related Policies

N/A

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

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