

mHealth Alert: Text4baby: Texting Health Messages to Pregnant Women and New Moms

2/16/2010

By [Susan W. Berson](#), [Russell H. Fox](#), [Rebecca Geller](#) And [Howard J. Symons](#)

Furthering the use of commercial wireless networks to deliver health information, the Obama Administration recently announced its new [Text4baby campaign](#), which sends free regular text messages with health information to pregnant women and new mothers. The program is particularly directed to women who may not have access to health information. The program is a joint effort of the Obama Administration, the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition, Voxiva, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, WellPoint, CareFirst BlueCross and Blue Shield, the CTIA Wireless Foundation, and others.

The Text4baby campaign is just one of the ways that mobile phones are being used to deliver health information, help ensure that patients comply with their medications, and monitor a patient's vital signs—all functions that are generally included under the category of “mHealth.” Such programs are increasingly attracting the interest of the federal government. For instance, in November 2009, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a public notice seeking comments on mobile health care issues involved in the National Broadband Plan. It is also contemplating the designation of additional spectrum for medical body area networks (MBANs) and other applications. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is, among other things, considering whether iPhone and other wireless applications should be regulated as medical devices, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is contemplating how to provide incentive payments for the “meaningful use” of certified electronic health record (EHR) technology.

Text4baby

Under the Text4baby program, women who text “BABY” (or “BEBE” for Spanish speakers) to 511411 will receive three free text messages each week with health tips according to their due date or their baby's birth date. The messages are vetted by government and non-profit health experts and address topics such as nutrition, immunizations, smoking, alcohol, and safe sleep. Text4baby messages also connect women to local clinics and support services for prenatal and infant care. The participants will continue to receive the weekly messages until the child's first birthday. The program also informs the women that the messages are not a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment and encourages the women to consult a physician.

The White House anticipates that Text4baby will reduce health care costs. Researchers at the George Washington University will evaluate the effectiveness of Text4baby by measuring health trends of new mothers and newborns.

Mintz Levin is available to provide counsel concerning the program and other mHealth developments.

For assistance in this area please contact one of the attorneys listed below or any member of your Mintz Levin client service team.

Howard J. Symons

(202) 434-7305

HJSymons@mintz.com

Russell H. Fox

(202) 434-7483

RFox@mintz.com

Rebecca Geller

(202) 434-7391

RGeller@Mintz.com

Susan W. Berson

(202) 661-8715

SBerson@mintz.com