

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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Simone M. Maline, Executive Director
Consumer Council System of Maine
219 Capitol Street, Suite 7
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Ms. Maline:

We appreciate the feedback provided by the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). We have included below an item-by-item response to your recommendations.

Many of the recommendations made by CCSM are related to issues with the Maine.gov infrastructure. It is important to note that DHHS has governance over only the structure and content of the maine.gov/DHHS site, and we do not have the authority or the ability to make changes to the larger Maine.gov web infrastructure. The Maine.gov infrastructure includes a wide variety of pages and content that is maintained by many people within State government. Within this infrastructure, DHHS has direct control over the content and structure of the maine.gov/DHHS site, including the section of the DHHS website dedicated to the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH).

There are state policies regarding website accessibility and usability standards. These policies represent the intent of the State of Maine and its agencies, including DHHS, to provide well-structured, accessible websites to the people of Maine. As such, DHHS strives to ensure the information we provide to the public is easily accessible to all Maine people, and we welcome additional feedback that is specific to the Department website, including information about programs and services supported by OBH.

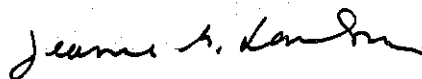
To address the points in order:

1. The Maine.gov website infrastructure is designed using best practices for accessibility and to meet standards for ADA compliance and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Adding site-specific controls that are available through native browser controls is contrary to best practices, because people with low vision usually set their default browser to meet their needs for all websites, not just one at a time. The state agency template has been carefully built using best practices to allow for this sort of control.
2. DHHS makes every effort to ensure the information on our website is accurate and timely. The example cited in the memo regarding the ADA Coordinator was updated prior to receipt of the memo upon the hire of the incumbent ADA Coordinator.
3. Between 50-70 percent of all traffic to pages in Maine.gov, including pages in Maine.gov/DHHS, comes through external site searches, like Google, and, in general, those searches work well. Use of the internal Maine.gov site search (Microsoft Bing) is monitored, and it is used very little – this is common on all websites.

4. It is true that often agency websites are built by subject matter experts within the agency, which sometimes leads to sites that are built for experts rather than the public. Addressing this issue is an ongoing effort at DHHS and we welcome any specific suggestions to improve the structure and content of the DHHS website.
5. Many of the multi-generational forms of communication using phone text, chat features, social media, etc. are outside of the scope of websites. Chat has been tested on a number of Maine.gov sites, including the DHHS site, only to be discontinued because it has been proven to be costly, rarely used, and ineffective.
6. DHHS publishes information on social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as through the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Many of our outreach and marketing campaigns also utilize advertising on other social media platforms to reach target audiences. We welcome any specific recommendations for improving content and the accessibility of the information we provide through these channels.
7. The state ITAC committee falls under the State of Maine Office of Information Technology (OIT) and information about ITAC is maintained and published by OIT. DHHS' website vendor has representation on the ITAC committee, and we have asked them to flag the need to improve the accessibility of information about ITAC at their next meeting.
8. The Webmaster is generally not the person who controls the site's organizational structure, or the content that is presented. OIT provides a Digital Accessibility Feedback Form on their website as a means to submit feedback about the accessibility of Maine.gov webpages. www.maine.gov/oit/accessibility
9. There have been multiple attempts over the years to give the public a method of notifying agencies when content is incorrect or outdated. Unfortunately, these have been abandoned because they are abused by spammers or people with other intentions. We will continue to look at ways to provide this functionality.

Thank you for sending this issue statement. We value your thoughtful contributions and insight.

Sincerely,



Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner

JML/klv

cc: Sarah Squirrel, Director, Office of Behavioral Health