



The International Health Regulations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Focal Points

Under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), every State Party is required to designate or establish a National Focal Point (NFP) and to provide the WHO with the necessary contact information. The IHR 2005 defines a National Focal Point as “the national center, designated by each State Party, which shall be accessible at all times for communications with the WHO IHR Contact Points” (Art. 4). The specific nature of the NFP varies by State Party, although optimally most NFPs will be offices, rather than individuals, to ensure round-the-clock availability in the event of an emergency. Each NFP is responsible for several forms of communication with the WHO and for information flow to relevant national sectors.

The Regulations identify four key functions for all NFPs:

- Remaining accessible at all times for communications with WHO IHR Contact Points (i.e., 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 52 weeks of the year)
- Sending urgent IHR communications to WHO IHR Contact Points
- Disseminating information to relevant national sectors, including those responsible for surveillance and reporting, points of entry, public health services, clinics and hospitals, and other government departments and
- Consolidating input from relevant national sectors, including those responsible for surveillance and reporting, points of entry, public health services, clinics and hospitals, and other government departments

Within each State Party, the WHO expects each NFP to be capable of several functions to support the IHR:

- Coordinating national analysis of national public health events and risks, including collaborative risk assessment with the WHO on public health events
- Information collection from and dissemination to relevant national government sectors
- Coordinating with national emergency response systems
- Providing advice to senior health and government officials on IHR implementation, function, notifications, and WHO recommendations
- Coordinating the assessment of existing public health surveillance and response capacities
- Cooperating with WHO to provide support to public health emergency prevention and response programs

**The WHO requires the National Focal Point to be accessible at all times
24 hours a day X 7 days a week X 52 weeks a year**

