Working with Wikis:
A quick tool to facilitate collaboration

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What's a wiki?

• A simple website where users can add, remove, and edit pages. The site is organized by linking related pages to each other and putting pages into folders.

• A wiki involves users in a continual process of creation and revision that ensures the information on the site remains updated, correct, and relevant.

• Wikis (from the Hawaiian term "WikiWiki" meaning "Super fast") are fast and easy to use. You don't need to know any computer languages to create or use one.

What features do wikis have?

Any of these features can be added to a wiki:
- New pages (announcements, calendars, etc.)
- Existing files (documents, pictures, movies, etc.)
- Message boards
- Blogs
- Chat rooms
- Mailing lists

Wikis also have several features not available on traditional websites:

Security options: Wikis support customized security options, so reading and editing privileges can be tailored to the needs of their users.
- Reading privileges—Choose whether anyone can see the wiki, or only people approved by the wiki administrator.
- Editing privileges—Choose whether anyone can edit the wiki and add/delete pages, or only people approved by the wiki administrator.

Automatic notification of updates: When users join a wiki, they have the option of being automatically emailed when the wiki is updated. This feature makes it so users only need to visit the wiki when there's new content that interests them.
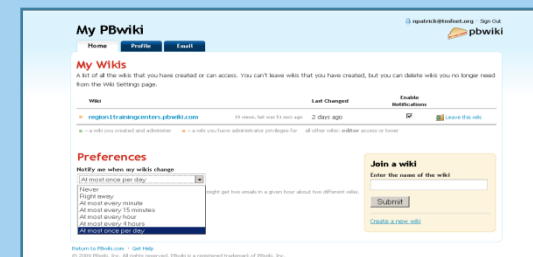
Subscribing to email updates for a wiki

Documentation repository: Wikis automatically keep logs of drafts and revisions, so there's a record of how a document has changed over time. This also helps keep your information safe, because it's virtually impossible to lose information once it's on the wiki. You can roll back to previous versions of a document.

Why use a wiki?

A wiki can be used in any or all of the following ways:

An easy website: Updating is quick and simple, so it's less daunting to keep current than a website.

A tool for communicating: Interactive features like message boards, chat rooms, blogs, and comment boxes facilitate a variety of communication options. This also makes it easy to capture ideas.

A tool for collaborating: Using the wiki ensures that everyone is using the most up-to-date file. Emails can quickly become difficult to sort through, and collaborators aren't always sure they're working on the most current version of a document. A wiki solves this problem by keeping the document in a central location so that it is easily accessed and always current.
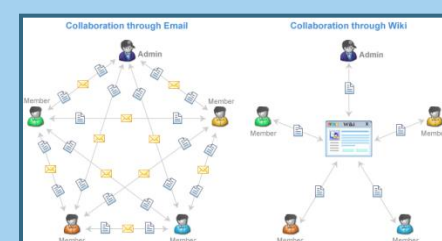
Collaborating via email vs. using a wiki.

Wiki Anatomy

Every wiki has an easy-to-remember URL. To access a wiki, type its URL into your web browser.

To edit a page on the wiki, click the EDIT tab and type in your changes. When you're done making changes, click the SAVE button at the bottom of the screen.

Each page has a comments box, which allows users to quickly ask questions or share feedback.

To create a page, click on this button and type in a page name. A variety of templates are available to help you design the page.

Users can search the entire wiki quickly and easily.

The Navigator box appears on every page. To see the contents of different files, just click on their name.

To invite someone to join the wiki, type in their email address.

A wiki is only as good as the information on it!

Here are some tips based on our experience using a wiki:

Define needs	Create expectations	Training speeds adoption	A wiki needs nurturing
• Identify what the group wants and needs • Structure the wiki so information is easy to find and use	• Specify expectations about how the wiki will be utilized • Expectations build ownership and encourage people to learn how to use the wiki	• Provide training for everyone who will use the wiki • Provide support – group members should know who to contact if they have questions	• A wiki grows as people become more comfortable using it • Remind group members to use the wiki, and try to incorporate it into everyday functions

Our wiki experience:
New England (Region 1) Federal Training Centers Collaboration

Conception
October 2008

The Challenge:
Federal Training Center Collaboration (FTCC) participants did not know who to contact at different Training Centers or how to reach them.
- No established channels of communication between the Training Centers
- A lack of knowledge about the scope of work and activities of the Training Centers
- Duplication of trainings between the Training Centers

The Solution:
The Region I Title X Family Planning Training Center (RTC) volunteers to set up a wiki for the group.
- It's free, fast, and allows participants to communicate directly with each other

Creation
January 2009

• The Region I Title X Family Planning Training Center (RTC) creates the wiki and holds a webinar to introduce partners to the wiki

• Two representatives are chosen to answer questions, ensure the wiki remains organized, and resolve technical issues.

Implementation
February 2009

• Presentations are given to introduce participants to the wiki
• Group discusses how best to organize and utilize the wiki
  - Each Training Center is designated a folder where it can post announcements, updates, training calendars, etc.
  - Training centers are responsible for keeping their folder content current
  - A collaboration folder exists for discussions about program planning, materials display tables, advertising, and other activities involving more than one Training Center

Dissemination
March 2009

• Webinars are held to introduce partners to the wiki and demonstrate its use
• A training webinars is archived on the wiki, so anyone joining the collaboration can access it
• The Training Centers email the wiki site administrators lists of staff members to be granted access to the wiki

Use
April 2009 to Present

Wiki Benefits

• **Strengthened communication and relationships:**
The wiki acts as a conduit to communicate and exchange information.

• **Identified opportunities to co-sponsor trainings:**
This year, there will be three TB trainings in Massachusetts co-sponsored by the Addiction Technology Transfer Center, the Northeastern Regional Training and Medical Consultation Consortium (RTMCC), and the Massachusetts Division of TB Prevention and Control.

• **Broadened audience at trainings:**
The wiki allows Training Centers to easily share announcements of upcoming events.

• **Increased distribution of durable materials:**
Training Centers have invited other centers to host materials tables and distribute information at their trainings, improving access to materials and broadening the audience reached by them.

• **Included other Training Centers in event planning:**
The wiki has made it easier to seek input from other Training Centers earlier in the event planning process, and solicit ideas and identify potential speakers and resources.