

Electronic Mail

204.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the proper use and application of the Department of State Hospital's (DSH) electronic mail (email) system by its employees. E-mail is a communication tool available to employees to enhance efficiency in the performance of job duties and is to be used in accordance with generally accepted business practices, DSH policies and current law (e.g., California Public Records Act). Messages transmitted over the e-mail system must only be those that involve official business activities or contain information essential to employees for the accomplishment of business-related tasks and/or communication directly related to the business, administration, or practices of DSH.

204.2 EMAIL RIGHT OF PRIVACY

All email messages, including any attachments, that are transmitted over DSH networks are considered DSH records and therefore are DSH property. DSH reserves the right to access, audit or disclose, for any lawful reason, any message including any attachment that is transmitted over its email system or that is stored on any DSH system.

The email system is not a confidential system since all communications transmitted on, to or from the system are the property of DSH. Therefore, the email system is not appropriate for confidential communications. If a communication must be private, an alternative method to communicate the message should be used instead of email. Employees using the DSH email system shall have no expectation of privacy concerning communications utilizing the system.

Employees should not use personal accounts to exchange email or other information that is related to the official business of DSH.

204.3 PROHIBITED USE OF EMAIL

Sending derogatory, defamatory, obscene, disrespectful, sexually suggestive and harassing or any other inappropriate messages on the email system is prohibited and may result in discipline.

Email messages addressed to the entire department are only to be used for official business related items that are of particular interest to all users and must be approved by the Hospital Police Chief or designee. Personal advertisements are not acceptable.

It is a violation of this policy to transmit a message under another user's name. Users are strongly encouraged to log off the network when their computer is unattended. This added security measure would minimize the misuse of an individual's email, name and/or password by others.

204.4 EMAIL RECORD MANAGEMENT

Email may, depending upon the individual content, be a public record under the California Public Records Act and must be managed in accordance with the established records retention schedule and in compliance with state law.

California Department of State Hospitals

Policy Manual

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The Custodian of Records shall ensure that email messages are retained and recoverable as outlined in the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.