GENERAL ADMINISTRATION
EMPLOYEE

043 GENERAL OFFICE POLICIES

043.18 Electronic Communications Policy

043.18.1 Purpose

To establish guidelines for professional, efficient communications sent on electronic devices belonging to the Human Services Department (HSD). This policy is in addition to and does not replace any HSD, state, or federal information technology policies.

043.18.2 Definitions

A. "Instant Messaging" or "IM" means a system for exchanging typed electronic messages instantly via the Internet or a cellular network, using a shared software application on a personal computer or mobile device.

B. "Chat" means text-based communication in real time between two or more users over a network or the Internet.

C. "Electronic Messages" means work-related messages sent by any device used to store, access or transmit information, including but not limited to, cellular telephones, desk top computers, tablets, and laptop computers, by electronic systems such as, I M, email, and texting.

D. "Email" means a system for sending messages from one individual to another via telecommunications links between computers or terminals.

E. "FTI" means Federal Tax Information, which is information received from the Internal Revenue Service or a secondary source, such as the Social Security Administration, Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, or Bureau of Fiscal Service. FTI also includes any information created by the recipient that is derived from tax return or tax return information.

F. "Staff" or "Staff Member" means:

1. An individual working for HSD;

2. An individual working under contract or as a vendor to the department; or

3. A volunteer providing services to the Department.

G. "Text messages" means individual messages sent from electronic devices.

H. "Texting" means the common term for sending text messages.

I. "PHI" means Protected Health Information, which is information that may consist of identifiers such as name, address, birth date, Social Security Number (SSN), member number, medical record number, or any number that uniquely identifies an individual in a system.

J. "PII" means Personally Identifiable Information, which is any information about an individual maintained by an agency, including any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, SSN, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, or biometric records; and any other information that is linked or linkable to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial and employment information.

043.18.3 Policy

A. All electronic messages shall be professional, and should use proper language and techniques to convey a professional image, as would be used in written business correspondence.

B. The communication methods referenced in this policy may not be available to all HSD employees.

C. For communications requiring more detail, such as negotiating contracts, placing orders or discussing assignments, staff shall use email, telephone, video conferencing or face-to-face meetings.

D. As referenced in the HSD *Use of Information Technology Resources Policy, 043.5*, staff shall have no expectation of privacy with respect to State IT resource usage. HSD may install software and/or hardware to monitor and record all IT resource usage, including email, website visits, chat messages and any other electronic messages. HSD may record or inspect any and all files stored on HSD owned equipment.

E. All HSD employees shall comply with this policy. Violation of this policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action including dismissal.

043.18.4 Prohibited Use of Instant Messaging, Chat and Texting

Staff is prohibited from sending the following types of information using IM, chat or text messages:

1. Confidential or personnel work related information;
2. PHI;
3. PII;
4. FTI;
5. Final policies and directives;
6. Final correspondence or memoranda related to official business;
7. Final minutes of governing boards, advisory groups, ad-hoc committees, or work groups developing programs;
8. Final messages that initiate, authorize, or complete a business transaction; and

9. Final reports or recommendations.

043.18.5 Prohibited Communications Using Any State Equipment

Sending messages exhibiting any of the following conduct is considered misuse of State electronic communications and is prohibited:

A. Any unlawful endeavors including hacking or phishing;

B. Ridiculing or spreading rumors about staff or the department;

C. Sending sexually explicit, harassing or extremist comments or material;

D. Making or forwarding discriminatory or tasteless jokes;

E. Using threatening, abusive, or profane language;

F. Sending communications supporting outside business functions not related to department business; or

G. Advocating for any political or religious cause.

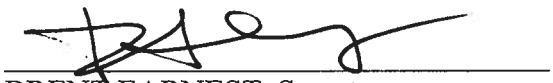
043.18.6 Retention

A. Instant messaging retention rules will follow the requirements set forth in the HSD Email Retention Policy, 043.15.

043.18.7 References

HSD Code of Conduct
HSD Use of Information Technology Resources Policy, 043.5
HSD Email Retention Policy, 043.15

APPROVED: DATE:



6/15/16

BRENT EARNEST, Secretary