STANTON TERRITORIAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

POLICY/PROCEDURE

Category:	Communication	DISTRIBUTION:	Hospital Wide Manuals
Subject:	Email – Acceptable Use	DEPARTMENT:	Information Services
CURRENT EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 2016	NEXT REVIEW DATE:	April 2019

Stanton Territorial Health Authority (STHA) recognizes that email is a business communications tool and users are obliged to use this tool in a responsible, effective, ethical and lawful manner. This policy outlines acceptable email use pertaining to general day use of the Government of the NWT (GNWT) Email System for all STHA User Account holders for STHA business. It is not intended nor does it include details on the use of the email system for sending confidential/ personal health information external to the STHA network. Disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment privileges will be taken for violation of this policy.

SPECIAL POINT

The GNWT Email Use Policy requires that, all employees are required to use a gov.nt.ca email address or other government address domain for all government communications as email messages are considered government records.

DEFINITIONS:

Email: includes all electronic mail systems (e.g. via a computer, Webmail or mobile email) provided by the GNWT.

STHA User: a person with an active Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) email account and access to the private STHA computer network. A STHA User may include STHA employees, affiliate employees, physicians, other health care professionals, students, contractors, vendors and any other person who has been approved for an STHA User Account.

STHA User Account: a personal or generic account consisting of an active directory username and a password that is granted user access privileges to the private STHA computer network.

CONDUCT

The following specific conditions apply to all STHA users regarding electronic communications:

- Email is a record and management of email must comply with existing Canadian legislation, regulations, policies and standards (e.g. *Health Information Act, Access to Information Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Act*, STHA R1960 Retention of Hospital Records Policy, GNWT Email Use Policy, GNWT Code of Conduct).
- Unauthorized attempts to access or use an email account other than the personal account assigned to a user is considered breach of policy.

When using electronic communications, STHA Users shall:

- Use the Email system for purposes that are respectful to others.
- Ensure that communication does not compromise STHA's reputation or image; users shall not send emails containing defamatory, offensive, or obscene remarks that may be disruptive to other companies, organizations, and/or individuals. If you receive an email of this nature, you should notify your supervisor.
- Represent STHA in a positive manner by identifying themselves honestly, accurately and completely while maintaining STHA's integrity and credibility.
- Refrain from sending unsolicited email messages.
- Refrain from sending email messages using another person's email account.
- Refrain from deliberately or maliciously or otherwise knowingly propagating viruses.

Sensitive and/or complex issues should be handled either face to face or over the phone (e.g. an email involving criticism, requests that are time-sensitive or in emergency situations).

It is professional practice to ensure a quick turnaround time while replying to emails. If the other party or person involved has asked for an answer to a time sensitive question, then make efforts to abide by that timeline. If there is no timeline suggested by the sender, aim to send a reply within 48 hours for a request internal to the GNWT and 72 hours for an external request.

Protection and Auditing

Electronic communication systems and all messages generated on or handled by the systems, including copies, are considered the property of STHA and are not the property of the users of the systems. All systems including messages, files, internet postings and transmissions are monitored by STHA and are subject to review.

STHA does not guarantee that electronic communications will be private. Users should be aware that various types of electronic communications can be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others. Further, electronic communications may be accessed by others in accordance with this policy (e.g. the public via ATIPP Act).

Distribution of Email Messages to all STHA email users (Mass Email)

Authorized use of the "STH_AllStaff" distribution option shall be restricted due to the stress that such emails place on the STHA network. Use of this option shall be limited to timely or urgent communication only.

There are email messages that are appropriate for mass distribution. Employees wishing to use the "STH_AllStaff" distribution list available in the global address book should seek approval from their manager.

Personal Use

Limited and occasional personal use is acceptable under the GNWT Code of Conduct if it does not affect performance of work responsibilities. All STHA users are expected to use good judgment and common sense when using their STHA user account. The following conduct is strictly prohibited and access to this material will be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination:

- Conducting illegal activities
- Sending messages and/or attachments that contain offensive materials that contain racist, sexist or sexually explicit items or content including: pictures, jokes, hoaxes or executable graphics.
- Sending hate mail, harassing others, making discriminatory remarks or using objectionable language.
- Misrepresenting other employees on any GNWT network by sending e-mail from another user's computer.
- Conducting or pursuing their own business interests or those of another organization.
- Political lobbying

Best Practices for Effective Electronic Communications

It is recommended that STHA Users adhere to the following guidelines when writing emails:

- Make the subject meaningful, informative, clear and concise.
- Write well-structured emails in plain language with clear and descriptive sentences/paragraphs.
- Limit emails to a single topic. Keep them short and to the point.

- Avoid using humor and destructive words if possible; words with sarcastic and judgmental tones can be amplified over email and misinterpreted.

- Limit jargon and use appropriate and professional language; do not use internet abbreviations (e.g. OMG, LOL, etc.).

- Only write in uppercase letters when it is grammatically correct to do so.

- Use only a standard white background and include a signature block in the email at the end of your message. The signature block should follow this format:

Name
Position
Unit
Stanton Territorial Health Authority
P.O. Box 10, 550 Byrne Road
Yellowknife NT X1A 2N1
Tel: 1-867-###-#### Fax: 1-867-###-####
www.stha.hss.gov.nt.ca

- Read over/edit the email message before you hit send or reply and double-check the recipient(s). Understand your audience and only use "Reply All" when it is necessary.

Staying Safe

- **Beware of viruses:** DO NOT CLICK on any links or open any attachments that come from unsolicited or suspicious looking emails/email addresses as the message may contain a virus and/or malicious software.

- **Beware of phishing:** If you receive an email from a bank or any other institution, asking you to click on a link and update your personal details, DO NOT CLICK on the link. Treat all unsolicited email messages with skepticism as the message may be a scam and do not provide any personal information. Instead, contact the GNWT Technology Service Center (TSC) and notify them of your suspicious email.

REFERENCES

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7. Saskatoon Health Region. (2015, March 10). *Email Acceptable Use Policy.* Retrieved from https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/about/RWPolicies/7311-25-005.pdf

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Reviewed and approved by:

A/ Chief Executive Officer (signed and dated)

April 25 /2016