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POLICY

This policy applies to the Johns Hopkins Health System (JHHS) Patient Financial Services (PFS) Department.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the appropriate electronic mail etiquette.


PROCEDURES

Email Dos:

- When you are away from the office, make sure a rule is active to let others know you are not in and who to contact in your absence. Do not set the reply to “reply to all”.
- You may want to send copies “cc” email to others as an “FYI” (informational). If however, you expect some sort of action or reply from that person, the email should be sent “to” them, not cc’d.
- Only send messages to the people who actually need to see it, do not overuse “cc’s”.
- Keep messages and replies brief and to the point, only one topic per message. Do not overuse; i.e. no need to reply “thanks”, “your welcome”, etc.
- Use email professionally, you never know where your message may be forwarded.
- Check your email regularly.
- Try to keep your emails as brief as possible, one or two screens is the most you should use.
- Make sure you include a “subject” and make sure it is meaningful and descriptive.
- Develop an orderly filing system for your emails. Delete unwanted emails to conserve disk space. Remember all email messages are automatically purged (deleted) every 180 days.
- All laws that govern defamation, discrimination and any other form of communication also apply to email.
- Messages may not contain anything that could be considered offensive or disruptive to any employee. Offensive content would include, but is not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any comments that would offend someone on the bases of age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.

Email Don’ts:

- Consider the sensitivity of the issue; you do not use email to discuss confidential personnel matters.
- Do not send “reply to all recipients” unless there is really a reason for everyone to receive your message.

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- Do not send chain letters, i.e. a message that contains a request to forward it to many people.
- Do not leave your email account open when you leave your computer, it should be password protected and closed. This prevents someone else from sitting at your computer and sending an email under your username.
- Don't send jokes or frivolous messages.
- Do not use ALL CAPS, IT CAN BE DISTRACTING AND IT'S KNOWN AS "YELLING".
- Do not send abusive, harassing or threatening email messages.

HIPAA Security Awareness E-PHI:

To protect E-PHI, follow these steps:

- Avoid disclosing unencrypted E-PHI in e-mails and shared files over the Internet.
- Avoid saving E-PHI to your computer hard drive. Save files on a Johns Hopkins server.
- Never share your login with another user.
- Never store E-PHI on a handheld device that lacks strong security controls.
- Use only the E-PHI needed to do your job.
- Log off or lock your computer when you are not using it.
- Report computer security problems quickly.

Remember: All computers and data are the property of JHHS and JHHS reserves the right to retrieve and read any message composed, sent, or received.

Note: When a message is erased it is still possible to recreate the message; therefore, privacy of messages can not be ensured.

SPONSOR

Senior Director, Patient Financial Services, JHHS

REVIEW CYCLE

Three (3) years

APPROVAL

Senior Director, JHHS

Date