

Administrative Policy No. 14.18

Subject: E-Mail & Voice Mail Greetings and Responses

Information Contact: Office of Communications
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Authorizing Source: DSHS Secretary

Effective Date: October 1, 1999

Revised: August 19, 2020

Approved By: Original signed by Dana Phelps
Deputy Chief of Staff

Purpose

To promote timely redirection of clients and timely responses through establishing expectations for the voice mail greetings, e-mail signatures and other e-mail features, and to identify parameters for timely response to voice and e-mail messages.

Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS employees who use e-mail and telephones, including TTY videophone equipment.

Additional Guidance

This policy must be used in conjunction with [Administrative Policy 15.15 – Use of Electronic Messaging Systems and the Internet](#).

Contact your local telecommunications coordinator for information about telephone and voice mail features.

Contact your local IT support person or the etsd@dshs.wa.gov for information about e-mail features.

Policy Requirements

A. Voice Mail

1. DSHS employees with voice mail capabilities on their desk phone or DSHS-issued cell phone must have a personal greeting that is updated at least once a week.
2. The personal greeting must include the following information:
 - Employee name, agency name (Department of Social and Health Services, not DSHS).
 - Administration, division, program or field office name.
 - Information about the employee's availability (such as days and hours generally in the office) and when the caller can generally expect a return call.
 - When available, instructions for obtaining immediate assistance if the employee is not available, such as identification of an alternate contact or communication of a 'zero out' option.
 - Alternate contact information, such as a department-issued cell phone or PDA, if available, where the employee might be reached.
 - Examples:
 - *"Hello, this is [your name] with the Department of Social and Health Services Community Services Office in Olympia. I am in the office today, September 6 between 7 and 4, but unable to take your call. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call within 48 hours. To speak with another staff member press 0."*
 - *"Hello, this is [your name] with the Department of Social and Health Services Home & Community Service Office in Spokane. On Tuesday, September 9, I will be out of the office in the afternoon. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call by noon on Thursday. For immediate assistance press 0."*
 - *"Hello, this is [your name] with the Department of Social and Health Services Office of Financial Recovery. For the week of September 8, I will be out of the office and unable to return calls until September 11th. If you need immediate assistance, please press 0 or call my co-worker Joan Evans at 360-555-4444."*
3. If available, department employees should use the "send calls" function on their desk phone at the end of the work day and anytime they plan to be out of the office.
4. Voice mail messages must be responded to within 48 hours or two business days of receipt or return to work.

B. Email Signature and Content

1. Employees are required to use an e-mail signature. The email signature must include the following information:

- Employee name
- Position or title
- Administration, division or program name
- Department of Social and Health Services
- Office telephone number
- Email address, using the firstname.lastname@dshs.wa.gov format.

Example of an email signature:

John Doe
Media Relations Manager
Office of Communications
Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-0000
john.doe@dshs.wa.gov

2. Where appropriate, email signature blocks must include department cell phone or PDA number, fax number, the mailing address of your workplace or mailstop.
3. Employees may include preferred pronouns in their email signature block to include:
 - she, hers, hers
 - he, him, his
 - they, them, theirs
4. Emails must not include stationary, wallpaper, backgrounds, themes, or animations, which increase the cost of electronic storage, consume needed network resources, and increase the cost of public disclosure searches. Avoid exotic text colors that may be difficult to read.
5. A less formal signature block may be used for follow-up replies when appropriate, but it must still contain some contact information. For example:

John Smith
360-902-0000

6. The signature will be standard for all agency staff, automatically generated by Outlook, and approved by the assistant secretaries. No logos or other artwork or clipart may be added to the signature. Program “icons”, that have been submitted by an assistant secretary and approved by the office of communications on a case-by-case basis, may be added to the signature for specific business purposes.

7. Inspiring quotes or similar personalized content may be included only when relevant to the business communication. If included, this content must be contained within the body of the email, not in the signature card.
8. Employees must use the Outlook “out of office assistant” setting to notify senders of circumstances that impact the employee’s ability to receive and respond to emails in a timely manner.

For the employee’s protection, personal or private information must not be included in “out of office” notifications.

9. “Out of office” messages must include information about when the employee will review and respond to emails as well as a point of contact if the sender needs assistance prior to the employee’s return.
10. Employees must review, and respond as necessary, to emails within 48 hours of receipt or return to work.
11. When an email requires a response, the employee must respond promptly. Subject to employee and unit priorities, employees should respond to senders by the date indicated in their messages.
12. The use of confidentiality notices on emails is NOT impacted by this email signature block policy requirements. Confidentiality notices are not part of the signature block.
13. If an employee uses a photo in their email account it must be of the employee, and recognizable as such. Photos may not be altered, caricatures, pets, scenery, sports teams, etc., or any other image than the employee themselves. Photos must be of standard size and format - preferably 192x192 pixels in PNG format.
14. Exceptions:
 - Replies from generic DSHS email boxes
 - Inclusion of assistant attorney general directed confidentiality notices, as applicable