Administrative Policy No. 14.18

Subject: E-Mail & Voice Mail Greetings and Responses

Information Contact: Office of Communications
MS 45100
(360) 902-7829

Authorizing Source: DSHS Secretary

Effective Date: October 1, 1999

Revised: March 10, 2016

Approved By: original signed by Dana Phelps
Senior Director, Policy and External Relations

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. **E-Mail Signature and Content**
1. Employees are required to use an e-mail signature. The e-mail 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
- E-Mail address, using the firstname.lastname@dshs.wa.gov format.

Example of an e-Mail 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, e-mail signature blocks must include: Department cell phone or PDA number, fax number, the mailing address of your workplace or mailstop.

3. E-mails 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.

4. 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

5. 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.

6. 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 e-mail, not in the signature card.

7. 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 e-mails in
a timely manner.

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

8. “Out of office” messages must include information about when the employee will review and respond to e-mails as well as a point of contact if the sender needs assistance prior to the employee’s return.

9. Employees must review, and respond as necessary, to e-mails within 48 hours of receipt or return to work.

10. When an e-mail requires a response, the employee must respond promptly, based on law, and program policy or practice. Subject to employee and unit priorities, employees should strive to respond to senders by the date indicated in their messages.

11. The use of confidentiality notices on e-mails is NOT impacted by this e-mail signature block policy requirements. Confidentiality notices are not part of the signature block.

12. Exceptions:

- Protection related to domestic violence
- Replies from generic DSHS e-mailboxes
- Inclusion of Assistant Attorney General-directed confidentiality notices, as applicable
- Unrequested commercial solicitations
- Messages identified as “junk” mail