

# Instant Messaging Policy Washington County

This policy provides employees with effective and consistent instant messaging (IM) use and content standards. This IM policy applies to all employees of the County of Washington, messages and information created and transmitted via the county's internal IM system.

## Rules

1. All IM communications and information transmitted, received, or archived in the county's IM system belong to the county.
3. Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy when using the county's IM system. The county reserves the right to monitor, access, and disclose all employee IM communications.
4. The IM system is intended for County business use only. Employees are prohibited from the improper use of computer resources which may result from engaging in unnecessary messaging not related to County business.
5. Treat IM messages as business records that may be retained and used as evidence in litigation, audits, and investigations.
6. Employees are required to retain all business-related instant messages and delete nonessential messages in accordance with the county's written IM retention and deletion schedule. Please talk to Washington County's Chief Information Officer if you need a copy or have questions about Washington County's IM retention and deletion policies, practices, and procedures.
7. Always use professional and appropriate language in all instant messages. Employees are prohibited from sending abusive, harassing, threatening, menacing, discriminatory, pornographic, disrespectful, or otherwise offensive instant messages.
8. Employees are prohibited from sending jokes, rumors, gossip, or unsubstantiated opinions via IM. These communications, which often contain objectionable material, are easily misconstrued when communicated electronically.
9. Employees may not use IM to transmit confidential, HIPPA related, proprietary, personal, or potentially embarrassing information about the County, employees, clients, business associates, or other third parties.
10. Employees may not share confidential, proprietary, or potentially embarrassing business-related or personal IMs with the media, competitors, prospective employers, or other third parties.
11. Employees are to share their IM usernames with colleagues strictly on a need-to-know basis.

If you have any questions about the above policies, address them to the Chief Information Officer before signing the following agreement.

I have read Washington County's IM policy and agree to abide by it. I understand that violation of any of the above policies and procedures may result in discipline, up to and including my termination.

Employee Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

per minute # 927  
dated 5/17/12

Please initial

LM [initials] DIV [initials] HGS [initials]