1.0 PURPOSE

As a communication tool and a source of valuable information, the use of the Internet and email is an integral part of the work environment at the North Bay General Hospital. Access to both of these resources is provided by the hospital to all employees as a privilege not a right. Staff are accountable for their actions while they are accessing the internet or sending emails.

The purpose of this policy is to provide all employees and physicians with guidelines regarding the appropriate use of the internet and the hospital's email system.

2.0 REQUIRED MATERIALS

N/A

3.0 PROCEDURE

Email is not a secure or private means of communication. Employees and physicians should treat all correspondence as public and ensure that communications are professional.

Information obtained from the internet should not be distributed to patients and/or families until it has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate employee/physician group(s) for distribution.
Acceptable Use:
- Employees and Physicians using the Internet / Email are representing the North Bay General Hospital. Employees and Physicians are responsible for ensuring that the internet / Email are used in an effective, ethical and lawful manner.
- The use of the Internet and email is for NBGH business only. Personal communications and internet browsing are acceptable so long as they do not interfere in the completion of your work duties and do not contribute to overtime requests. Limit use for personal reasons to break and lunch time.

The following are acceptable uses of the internet:
- For professional growth and development.
- To support clinical decision making.
- For identifying research information which could be reviewed by the appropriate person(s) for applicability to clinical practice.
- To support the development of educational materials for staff or patients.
- Users may send and receive Email attachments that do not exceed 30MB in size.

Prohibited Use:
Employees are not permitted to use the Internet or email for purposes that are illegal, unethical, harmful or non-productive. Transmitting, viewing, downloading or executing any content identified in the following list is prohibited:

- Any conduct that is contrary to a Hospital Policy.
- Offensive content of any kind (obscene, profane, harassing).
- Providing information outside the employee’s scope of practice and direct responsibilities and outside established procedures for responding to requests for information.
- Sending or forwarding chain emails.
- Conducting personal business using company resources.
- Computer games.
- Download of unapproved applications or non-business related information.
- Promoting discrimination on the basis of race, gender national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or disability.
- Knowingly or recklessly posting false or defamatory information about an individual or the organization.
- Using the system for political lobbying.
- Threatening or violent behavior.
- Illegal activities.
- Commercial messages.
- Gambling.
- Personal financial gain.
- Downloading any material that is protected by copyright
- Sending patient or business sensitive information by Email or over the Internet; except where explicitly authorized and it has been verified that the communication is secure.
- Introducing viruses or maliciously tampering with any computer system or network.
- Attempting to gain unauthorized access to any computer system or network.
- Accessing a computer or network using someone else’s username and password.

3.2 Email Etiquette

- Think before you send an email. When composing an email be as clear, polite and concise as you would be in a verbal interaction face to face or on the telephone.
- Email users should identify themselves clearly and accurately.
- Spell check all mail prior to transmission.
- **NEVER** transmit patient information that contains identifying information. Email is not secure. The use of J numbers is acceptable.
- Be case sensitive – the use of capitals in an email is considered shouting.
- Use sarcasm and humor cautiously – not everyone has the same sense of humor and there are varying perceptions of what is appropriate and what is not – know your audience.
- Do not send unnecessary attachments.
- Never assume your email messages are private or that they can be read only by yourself or the person you are sending it to.
- In the subject line, clearly identify the purpose of the email.
- Always start your message with the name of the person it is being sent to and end it with your name and if necessary your contact information.
- If you require a response within a specified timeframe, indicate that in your email.
- Make sure your “signature” is at the bottom of your email and include the name and address of the hospital, your title, email address and phone number if appropriate.
- Use the “reply all” option selectively – unless everyone needs to hear your response, only respond to the sender.
- Do not label your message as urgent unless it really is – overuse of the urgent / important flag may eventually result in truly important emails being overlooked or ignored.
- Manage your email – ensure you clear your deleted and sent boxes on a regular basis and do not keep emails longer than required.
- Try and take at least 10 minutes per day that you are at work to check your email. This will help control the build up of email and ensure you do not miss important notices.
- Work related email requests for information or sharing of information, that require a response should be responded to in a timely manner unless you are on an extended time of unscheduled shifts (e.g. part-time staff who are not booked to work for 5 days), on vacation or sick leave. The sender may want to consider an alternate form of communication if immediate response is required (such as face to face or by telephone). Remember that not all employees have immediate access to email.

3.3 **Use of Email to Share Employee Information:**

In addition to the points outlined in 3.2 – Email Etiquette, the following guidelines should be adhered to when communicating information about employees by email:

- When sending information regarding an employee, ensure you do not share confidential / personal health / medical information.
- Never use reply all when responding to an email regarding employee issues – reply to the sender and cc the appropriate additional individuals if there are any.
- Use the copy and paste function with discretion – inappropriate information may be missed and forwarded to inappropriate individuals.
- If there is confusion regarding a message, uncertainty regarding the intent or an emotional reaction is evoked, discontinue the use of email and continue the interaction either face to face or via telephone.

3.4 **Guidelines for the Use of “NBGH” for Emails:**

Consider the following questions when sending an email to “NBGH”:

- Is this message of an urgent or immediate nature?
- Does this message really pertain to ALL staff?
- Can I select the individuals who need to receive this message?
- Could this message / information be distributed in other ways?

**Examples of Appropriate NBGH Emails:**

- Hospital-wide events for staff
  - Staff appreciation events
  - All staff communiqués
  - Staff organized events / fund raisers held outside NBGH
  - Winners of staff awards
- Press releases
- Items that require immediate attention
  - Flu outbreaks / infection control issues
  - Health and safety items
• Building maintenance notices
• Issues with equipment or systems that impact staff (e.g. Meditech down times, CT downtimes)

Examples of Inappropriate NBGH Emails:
• Soliciting emails
  ▪ Classified ads
  ▪ Fundraisers for personal volunteer work or organizations one might belong to
  ▪ Follow up emails – e.g. our catering last week was awesome – thanks to everyone and we will do it again
• Loss of personal items such as pets, office supplies, clothing or keys

4.0 REFERENCES

www.iwillgollow.com/emailetiquette.html

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