Acceptable Use of Email Policy Guidance Document

# Document Purpose and Overview

Electronic mail (email) is used in many health institutions and clinical settings and is often the primary communication and awareness method within an organization. At the same time, misuse of email can pose many legal, privacy and security risks, therefore it’s important for users to understand the appropriate use of electronic communications. This tool is to help clinics develop a policy to manage the acceptable uses of email within their practices.

# Instructions for use

The instructions below are meant to assist you with making this document your own and to fulfill your obligations under the Health Information Act. The document is created in a standard word document and can be edited to address the specific agreement needed:

* Please read the document carefully and ensure that all sections are relevant to your clinic and adjust as required.
* There are highlighted sections throughout the document to assist you in customizing your information. Please review these sections and make them specific to your clinic’s practice.
* The sections that are not highlighted are recommended to be part of your policy to support compliance with the Health Information Act. Please make sure you read and understand these sections.
* Please remove all highlighting as you fill out the relevant section and ensure that your clinic name is entered throughout the document including the header.
* These policies currently have simple formatting and should be adapted to the clinic’s policy manual formatting.
* Determine the best way to communicate this policy with relevant team members and implement the policy.

## Privacy Training

The Alberta Medical Association offers privacy and security training to any Alberta community-based medical clinic. [Visit the AMA website today to learn more!](https://www.albertadoctors.org/leaders-partners/clinic-patient-privacy/privacy-training)

Policy: Acceptable Uses of Email

# Policy Details

Creation Date: DATE

Applies to: All Employees and Contractors

Approved by: LEAD CUSTODIAN

# Purpose

To ensure the proper use of clinic’s email system and make users aware of what the clinic deems as acceptable and unacceptable use of email. This policy outlines the minimum requirements for use of email within Clinic’s Network. This policy covers appropriate use of any email sent from a clinic email address.

# Policy

All use of email must be consistent with clinic’s policies and procedures of ethical conduct, safety, compliance with applicable laws and proper business practices.

Please review and adapt as per your clinic’s processes.

* Any clinic email account should be used for clinic business-related purposes only. No personal communication from these accounts is permitted.
* All clinic data contained within an email message, or an attachment, must be secured in a manner to ensure that would prevent the information to be accesses by a person who is not authorized or render the information unintelligible to the person who is not authorized to access the information. Please insert your clinic processes. For example, state how your clinic sends health information in an email such as using encryption, secure messaging, etc.
* Email should be retained only if it qualifies as a clinic business record. Email is a clinic business record if there exists a legitimate and ongoing business reason to preserve the information contained in the email.
* Email that is identified as a clinic business record shall be retained according to Clinic’s Record Retention Schedule. Please add more details here as required.
* The clinic email system shall not to be used for the creation or distribution of any disruptive or offensive messages, including offensive comments about race, gender, appearance, disabilities, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious beliefs and practice, political beliefs, or national origin. Employees who receive any emails with this content from any clinic employee should report the matter to their supervisor immediately.
* Users are prohibited from automatically forwarding clinic email to a third-party email system. Individual messages which are forwarded by the user must not contain clinic confidential information.
* Users are prohibited from using third-party email systems and storage servers such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN Hotmail, etc. to conduct clinic business, to create or memorialize any binding transactions, or to store or retain email on behalf of clinic. Such communications and transactions should be conducted through proper channels using clinic-approved documentation.

Compliance:

The Privacy Officer will verify compliance to this policy through various methods, including but not limited to, business tool reports, internal and external audits, and feedback to the Privacy Officer.

Any exception to the policy must be approved by the Privacy Officer in advance.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Clinic's Privacy Officer, NAME, EMAIL, PHONE.