

Managing e-mail and e-visits in the EHR

Scope	This policy addresses the organization's policy on the use of electronic communication mechanisms to exchange protected health information between providers and with individuals.
Related policies and procedures	The following policies relate to this policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acceptable use policy• Creation and use of Web services
Definition of terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-mail—the transmission of messages across communication networks.• E-visit—the secure exchange of individually identifiable health information, which follows e-visit guidelines, may be reimbursable, and is retained in the individual's EHR.• Secure Web services—the offering of a variety of services through a secure Web site, such as e-visits, appointment scheduling, refill requests, results reporting, health education, and others, to preregistered providers and individuals.
Policy statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. E-mail can be an effective means of communication. However, e-mail for communications between providers or with individuals concerning individually identifiable health information is subject to risk that must be weighed carefully in light of convenience. As such, it is our policy that we will only use e-mail to communicate with individuals who are our patients and with other providers outside of our secured intranet to notify that they have a message waiting at our secure Web service. E-mail will not be used for any other communications with or about patients or include individually identifiable health information.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal e-mail addresses of members of our work force may not be given to patients under any circumstances.• It is our policy to use electronic messages through secure Web services to supplement face-to-face, telephone, or traditional communications under defined circumstances, and when there is a clear advantage and expressed preference by the patient.• All other uses of e-mail must be limited to general communications that do not concern patients and do not include confidential employee information or proprietary business information.

Use of e-mail will be monitored. Members of the work force should understand that e-mail is the property of the facility and is not private. Any member of the work force who misuses email is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.