

NIH Policy Manual

0006 - NIH Mobile Device Texting Policy

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Transmittal Notice

1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: The primary objective of this policy is to prevent disruptions and maintain the confidentiality and record-keeping standards outlined by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as specified in NARA Bulletin 2015-02 and NARA's General Records Schedule 6.1. This policy applies to all Short Message/Messaging Service (text messages) that relate to NIH Business.

2. Filing Instructions:

- **Insert:** Temporary Emergency NIH Policy Manual, Chapter 0006 dated 02/06/2024
- **Expiration:** This temporary policy will remain in effect until either: 1) a technical solution is implemented that will enable the automatic archiving of text messages in accordance with federal records management requirements, 2) the policy is made permanent.

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Policy Manual, contact the Division of Compliance Management, OMA on 301-496-4606, or enter this URL: <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx>.

A. Purpose

To prevent disruptions and maintain the confidentiality and record-keeping standards as specified in NARA Bulletin 2015-02 and NARA's General Records Schedule 6.1, by prohibiting texting for official NIH Business using NIH-Managed Mobile Devices.

B. Scope

This temporary policy applies to all NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs) and NIH personnel.

C. Background

All text messages sent and received on mobile devices, considered NIH Business communications, must comply with NARA's record-keeping standards, as outlined in [NARA Bulletin 2015-02](#) and [NARA's General Records Schedule 6.1](#). Therefore, if an individual uses a mobile device to conduct NIH Business on platforms other than NIH approved communication technologies (e.g., Teams, Skype; which store copies of the message) they must forward those correspondences to their official NIH email account for proper records preservation within 20 business days.

D. Policy

1. Prohibition of Text Messaging on Personal Mobile Devices for NIH Business:

- NIH Staff are prohibited from using Short Message/Messaging Service on personal mobile devices for NIH business.
- NIH Staff are prohibited from using unapproved Internet Protocol based mobile messaging (e.g., Apple iMessage, WhatsApp, Messenger for Android, and other instant and direct messaging communication services) for official NIH Business on NIH Managed Mobile Devices.

2. Requirements for use of NIH-Managed Mobile Devices for Texting:

If NIH Staff use a NIH-Managed Mobile Device to conduct NIH Business on platforms other than NIH approved communication technologies (e.g., Teams, Skype) they must forward those texts or other correspondences (sent or received) within 20 business days to their official NIH email account, for proper records preservation.

3. Exceptions for Critical Situations:

- An exception to the texting prohibitions/requirements in 1. and 2., above, for the conduct of NIH Business is permitted in situations where human life and safety are at risk. Such circumstances may include critical situations such as natural disasters, mass casualties, or tactical operations such as:
 - Community alerts.
 - Communications related to BSL3/4 laboratories.
 - Irradiators situations for the protection of staff, patients, and visitors' safety.

- Communicating with special needs populations or addressing language barriers (Note: Microsoft Teams has built-in 508 accessibility features).
 - Texting emergency services, such as 911 operators.
 - Coordinating travel arrangements related to NIH Business where timely communication is essential to ensure safety.
- Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis to ensure effective response and safety.
 - If any NIH Staff member **must** use their personal mobile device to conduct NIH Business, or NIH-managed Mobile Devices on platforms other than NIH approved communication technologies, they must still forward those correspondences to their official NIH email account for preservation within 20 business days.

4. Documentation and Records Requirements:

All text messages sent and received on mobile devices that are considered NIH Business communications must comply with NARA's record-keeping standards, as outlined in [NARA Bulletin 2015-02](#) and [NARA's General Records Schedule 6.1](#).

E. Responsibilities

All NIH Staff that use mobile devices to conduct NIH Business are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

F. Duration

This policy is temporary and will remain in effect until either:

1. A technical solution is implemented that will enable the automated archiving of text messages in accordance with federal records management requirements, or
2. The policy is made permanent.

G. References

1. NIH Policy Manual, Chapter 1743 - [Managing Federal Records](#)
2. NIH Policy Manual, Chapter 0002 - [NIH Mobile Device Policy](#)
3. [NARA Bulletin 2015-02](#)
4. [NARA General Records Schedule 6.1](#)

H. Definitions

1. **NARA** - National Archives and Records Administration

2. **NIH-Managed Mobile Device** - There are two classes of NIH mobile devices: Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) that are acquired, issued and managed by NIH; and Non-Government Furnished Equipment (Non-GFE), including personally owned devices and devices provisioned by other entities, such as a contractor, used to access NIH IT resources through the approved enterprise-wide Mobile Device Management (MDM) service. Government furnished mobile devices must be enrolled in this MDM service (e.g., Mobile Iron) before being allowed direct access to NIH IT resources. Refer to Manual Chapter 0002 [NIH Mobile Device Policy](#) for additional information.
3. **NIH Staff** - All personnel working on campus, or telework/remote, who undertake NIH Business (e.g., NIH employees, contractors, fellows, special volunteers).
4. **NIH Business** - Anything that relates to NIH official operations. In regard to texting, NIH Business includes such communications as texting to notify supervisors of potential lateness, communicating with third parties relating to NIH work, or coordinating work related meetings, events or functions.
5. **OCIO** - Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Director, NIH
6. **OMA** - Office of Management Assessment, Office of the Director, NIH

Appendix 1: NIH Temporary Mobile Device Texting Policy – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Overview: If you have additional questions, please submit them to the NIH Records Management Program at nihrecordsmanagement@nih.gov and the team will get back to you with a response and may use your question to enhance these FAQs.

1. Does this temporary policy apply to personally owned devices?

Answer: Mobile devices that are personally owned, or contractor-furnished, may only access NIH IT resources through an application “container” managed by the approved, enterprise-wide MDM service (defined along with NIH issued mobile devices as “NIH-Managed Mobile Devices”). Conducting NIH business on personally owned devices or contractor-furnished devices not approved for use at NIH is strictly prohibited. Refer to [NIH’s Mobile Device Policy](#) for additional information.

2. Can we use our NIH-issued mobile devices for conducting NIH business by voice and/or video?

Answer: Yes, voice calls are permitted on NIH-Managed Mobile Devices. Video chat/calls are allowed utilizing NIH approved platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype and/or ZoomGov. Unapproved native voice/video or third-party video applications such as Facetime, WhatsApp, Google Meet, etc. are not authorized or permitted. If Mobile video calls are

initiated via an unauthorized platform, NIH Staff are allowed to respond and redirect these calls to an authorized platform.

3. What if I receive a text message from an external source to an internal NIH partner?

Answer: Individuals should forward these messages to an NIH approved communication platform (such as MS Outlook or MS Teams) and respond via the approved communication platform. For example, if you receive a text message from an external partner, forward the text to your official NIH email address and respond via email. You may respond to the original text message to obtain the information necessary (such as email address) to continue communicating on an approved communication platform. NIH employees must forward these correspondences to their official NIH email account for preservation within 20 business days.


4. How do I forward text messages to my email?

Answer: For users with iPhones and Android/Google devices, use the NIH Knowledge Base [instructions](#) to forward text messages to your NIH email. If you experience issues, please contact the [NIH IT Service Desk](#) for assistance.

5. What are the approved alternative texting applications?

Answer: If you are using text to conduct NIH Business you can use email or Microsoft Teams SMS texting, i.e., “Chat” functionality, both are approved alternatives. Use the following [instructions](#) to send SMS texts through MS Teams.

To start a chat with an SMS participant:

- a. Select **New chat** .
- b. Enter the SMS participant's phone number in the **To:** field, then select the phone number in the results.
- c. Enter a name in the **Add contact name** field (**Type a name** on Desktop) and select **Add** (**Add Name** on Desktop).
Tip: The SMS participant will not see the name you assigned them; it is only for your reference, so you know with whom you're chatting.
- d. Send a message to finish creating your one-to-one chat. The SMS participant you invited will receive an SMS from Microsoft starting the chat. The SMS will also contain links for the SMS participant to join Teams via the app and learn more about Microsoft Teams (free).