

DHHS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Section III: Communications
Title: Telephone Acquisition and Use
Current Effective Date: 12/1/03
Revision History: 3/30/05
Original Effective Date: 12/01/03

Purpose

To establish the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) policy and procedures governing employee use of the state telephone system and state issued telephone credit cards, and to provide guidelines in general for the use of telephones during business hours.

Policy

All DHHS employees shall adhere to the rules for telephone usage as outlined in the [Budget Manual](#) issued by the NC Office of State Budget and Management (see Attachment A). In addition, DHHS establishes the following procedures that supplement the OSBM rules. State telephone equipment, cellular telephones and pagers are provided for official state business only. Use of state telephones for local, personal calls must be kept to a minimum in both number and duration.

Implementation

1. Cellular Telephones and Paging Equipment
 - A. Procedures
 1. Employee submits the [cellular phone services/pager request authorization and change form](#) and written justification to his/her supervisor for approval, explaining why the item is needed to conduct state business.
 2. If the supervisor approves, he/she forwards the authorization form and written justification to the division director for approval.
 3. If the division director approves:
 - a. The supervisor will complete the [cellular phone services/pager request authorization and change form](#) if equipment can be reassigned from an existing cellular phone service/pager equipment plan, or

- b. New equipment must be procured through the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS). Division budget officers are responsible for completing the [ITS Cellular Phone Service Request Form](#). The DHHS Director of Budget and Analysis must approve exceptions if an existing cellular telephone contract is not used.
- 4. Division budget officers are responsible for signing off on fund availability and for choosing cellular telephone rates / pager plans that are the most economical for division needs and circumstances.

B. Receiving Calls

Employees are responsible for ensuring that all calls from their state-issued cellular phone are business related. Non-business calls are prohibited, except in emergency circumstances (as determined by the department head or designee) or in unpreventable instances such as incoming calls that the user has no ability to prevent. Even in these limited instances, employees shall minimize the duration of such calls once it becomes evident that they are non-business related.

C. Acknowledgement

Each individual with a state-assigned cellular phone must sign a [Telephone User Acknowledgement form](#) that signifies that they have received and read this policy. The signed statement is placed permanently in the employee's personnel file.

2. Transfer or Return of Equipment

A. When an employee transfers, exits department employment, or no longer requires use of telephone / paging equipment, the division director shall ensure that:

- 1. Telephone equipment is accounted for and retrieved if necessary (such as cellular equipment, pagers, or telephone equipment at a remote or telecommuting location).
- 2. ITS or the appropriate provider is notified when such equipment is retrieved or transferred to another employee.

3. Theft, Loss, or Damage

A. Divisions must promptly notify the ITS department or service provider (no later than 72 hours after confirmation) so that service can be deactivated or restored, as appropriate.

B. Divisions shall file an [SBI Report](#) through the DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis.

4. Other Situations

A. If, in an unusual situation, an employee is required to make a personal long distance or ANY personal cellular call that violates DHHS or OSBM policy, the employee and supervisor shall make arrangements to reimburse the state for any incurred costs. The employee should make every effort to avoid such calls.

5. Reimbursements for Business Use of Personal Phones

A. Employees must submit a [Travel Reimbursement Form \(DHHS-403\)](#) in order to obtain reimbursement for business calls made away from the office as well as for reimbursable use of personal cellular phones. The employee's location must be identified as well as the person/business called. Requests are normally processed monthly.

With regard to reimbursements for cellular calls:

1. A copy of the cellular bill denoting business related calls must be submitted for reimbursement, with personal calls blacked out for privacy.
2. No reimbursement will be made for the instrument, monthly fees, or the portion of "free" minutes.
3. Business related minutes will be considered the last minutes billed for the month.
4. Cellular calls shall be listed under "Other Expenses" on the form with a copy of the cellular invoice attached and calls highlighted.

6. Enforcement

- A. Division directors shall be responsible for maintaining a current record of the assignment of all pagers and cellular phones within their division.
- B. Supervisors are responsible for reviewing monthly bills to determine appropriate use. If cellular, supervisors shall adjust individual cellular plans within the cellular plans selected by the DHHS Budget Officer to assure that the department receives the lowest average cost per minute (based upon normal minutes used each month)..
- C. Division budget officers are responsible for maintaining a current inventory of all division cell phones that includes but is not limited to: Phone number, vendor, plan description, charge code, employee name and last date plan was reviewed. A copy of the inventory will be submitted to the DHHS Controller's Office as a part of the June 30th supplies inventory.

- D. The DHHS Office of the Internal Auditor will periodically sample phone records for propriety.
- E. Any determination of misuse of telephones is considered a violation of the Rules of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

For questions or clarification on any of the information contained in this policy, please contact [the DHHS Office of Budget & Analysis](#). For general questions about department-wide policies and procedures, contact the [DHHS Policy Coordinator](#).