

Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Regulation Number: 33

Revised: January 1, 2025

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I. Purpose

Information Technology equipment, services, and infrastructure, collectively known as “Information and Technology Systems”, are utilized, and deployed by the County in any department in support of its mission to provide efficient, effective, and responsive government that meets the public’s needs. The purpose of this policy is to provide users guidance and education in the appropriate, safe, secure, legal, and acceptable way in which the County’s Information and Technology Systems may be used. This policy incorporates any obligations to comply with County, State, and Federal laws, rules, and regulations regarding the management of information technology equipment and safeguarding of systems and data.

II. Definitions

Information and Technology Systems: Includes but is not limited to laptops, desktops, servers, tablets, cell phones, printers, supporting network and telecommunication equipment and infrastructure, system software, on County premises and/or cloud applications, analytical tools and services, internet, email, databases, data warehouses and data.

Users: Includes but is not limited to full-time, part-time, temporary, elected officials, appointees and/or contract staff, vendor support personnel and/or consultants of Guilford County who have access to, use or interact with County Information and Technology Systems.

Protected Information: Includes but is not limited to, confidential and/or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) such as Social Security, Driver’s License, State Identification, Passport, and telephone numbers, home address, birth dates, email addresses, Protected Health Information (PHI) such as Medical Records and health information, PCI data such as Bank Account, Debit, Credit Card numbers, Pin Codes whether in print or digital format except as otherwise provided for in law.

III. Scope

This Acceptable Use Policy applies to Guilford County’s Information and Technology Systems, their use, and users.

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IV. Governing Laws, Regulations, Frameworks and Industry Standards

All users are expected to use County-provided Information and Technology Systems responsibly, ethically, and in compliance with all applicable local, State, Federal law, regulation, County policies or policies accepted frameworks, and industry standards including but not limited to:

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- N.C.G.S. 143-805- et seq.: Prohibit viewing of pornography on government networks and devices.
- Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI)
- Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS)
- IRS Publication 1075
- National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework
- Hatch Act
- Copyright, Licensure Laws, Contracts and Agreements related to software used by Guilford County. Examples of violations include but are not limited to copying, distributing, altering, or translating copyrighted materials, software, music, or other media. To do any of these things, you need the copyright holder's permission or as allowed by law.

V. Policy

County Requirements and Exceptions

- a) The County Information Technology Department will develop and maintain a set of standards and guidelines in accordance with Federal and State laws, regulations, accepted frameworks, and industry standards.
- b) Information Technology Standards and Guidelines will be approved by the County Manager and made accessible to users of Information and Technology Systems.
- c) Information Technology Standards and Guidelines will be reviewed and updated as deemed appropriate by the Information Technology Department to ensure compliance with applicable Federal and State laws, regulations, accepted frameworks, industry standards and respond to changes in Information Security and Data Privacy risk.

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- d) Changes to Information Technology Standards and Guidelines will be approved by the County Manager or delegate.
- e) Users of County Information and Technology Systems are responsible for familiarizing themselves on a regular basis with and adhering to the County's Information Technology Standards and Guidelines published and maintained by the Information Technology Department.
- f) Users have an obligation and responsibility to protect the County's Information and Technology Systems and Protected Information from intentional or accidental misuse, damage, disclosure, and loss.
- g) County-owned and operated Information and Technology Systems including data that is created, sent, received, or stored in therein are at all times the property of Guilford County. Guilford County reserves the right to retrieve and read any such messages, documents, and data with or without advance notice or employee consent or expectation of privacy.
- h) Users must not acquire, purchase, install or deploy technology, devices, applications, without following the procedures and processes outlined in the County's Information Technology Standards and Guidelines.
- i) Users shall not view pornography as the term(s) is defined in N.C.G.S. 143-805(g) on any county owned technology devices.
- j) Users must participate in and comply with ongoing County provided Information Technology and/or Information Security Awareness Training.
- k) Any exception to the practices described in this policy must be formally requested in accordance with the County's Information Technology Standards and Guidelines.
- l) Users have a responsibility to report Information Technology incidents outlined in and in accordance with the County's Information Technology Standards and Guidelines and must cooperate with incident response processes and procedures.

Violations

- a) Failure to comply with the Acceptable Use Policy, the County's Information Technology Standards and Guidelines or any applicable policies, including Guilford County Personnel Regulation Number 35 related to use of social media, may result in the suspension of access to the County's Information and Technology Systems and may be subject to an adverse employment action pursuant to Regulation 28- Guilford County's Disciplinary Policy including and up to termination.

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- b) Any violation of N.C.G.S. 143-805 will result in notification to the State Chief Information Officer pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-805(f) and the user, if an employee, will be subject to suspension without pay, demotion or dismissal from employment under Personnel Regulation 28.

Prohibited Uses

- a) Users must not use the County's Information and Technology Systems to engage in activity that is illegal or fraudulent or in violation of any local rule/regulation, State law, Federal law, or explicitly prohibited by County policy or policies.
- b) Users must not intentionally access, create, store, or transmit material considered offensive, discriminatory, indecent, obscene materials or intended to harass another individual. Departments requiring specific staff to access such material as part of their job responsibilities (i.e., Law Enforcement), should submit an exception request with justification to the Information Technology Department.
- c) Users are expected to be respectful to co-workers and community members in their electronic communications including but not limited to, on-line meetings, posts, chat, email, voice, and text messages. Any form of disruptive, disrespectful, slanderous, harassment, hate speech, or discrimination is not tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary action under Regulation 28.
- d) Users must not generate or forward any correspondence or materials that could be construed by a reasonable person as fraudulent, illegal, harassing, disruptive, obscene, indecent, profane, or intimidating.
- e) Information and Technology Systems must not be used for personal benefit, e.g., gambling, unsolicited advertising, unauthorized fund raising, personal business ventures, or for any activity that is prohibited by local, State, Federal law, or County policies or policies.
- f) Users must not access, utilize, email, or share materials found on the Internet which are not in compliance with copyright or licensing laws.
- g) Information and Technology Systems must not be used for political activity, in accordance with Guilford County Personnel Regulation Number 7 and the HATCH Act, including sending or displaying political messages, unauthorized solicitation of funds or services, coercing contributions for political or partisan purposes, interfering, or affecting the results of elections or nominations for political office.

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- h) Users shall not view, download or save pornography to any county device, or on the County's network, except as authorized pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-805(d).

IT Security and Monitoring

- a) Use of County Information and Technology Systems, related content and data is generally a matter of public record and may be subject to management review at any time. Employees should not expect a right to privacy.
- b) Reasonable and occasional personal use of internet, email, and telephone services may be acceptable providing it follows the Information Technology Standards and Guidelines. Employees should consult with their supervisors in advance if they have any questions about the appropriateness of certain practices.
- c) Reviewing or checking County IT use may occur in the following situations if authorized personnel consider it necessary:
 1. For generally accepted, network-administration practices.
 2. To prevent or investigate actual or potential information security incidents and system misuse;
 3. To investigate reports of violation of County policy or local, State, or Federal law;
 4. To comply with legal requests for information (such as subpoenas and public records requests); or
 5. To retrieve information in emergency circumstances where there is a threat to health, safety, or County property involved.
 6. The County may contact local or Federal law enforcement authorities to investigate any matter.