



WV Executive Branch Privacy Tip What Is Privacy?



Do you ever wonder why it is important to know about privacy as a state employee?

The word privacy has many definitions, and it means different things to different people.

On a personal level, privacy is all about being left alone – being able to avoid unwanted marketing communications. Other people care more about being anonymous – the ability to shop or associate without having to provide any personally identifiable information (PII), like a home phone number.

The West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Policies provide guidance on the protection and respect of employee's and consumers' personal information and define privacy as "the appropriate use and disclosure of PII under the circumstances." What is appropriate will depend on context, law and individual expectations, as well as the right of an individual to control the collection, use and disclosure of PII – and the rules are laid out in privacy policies.

As members of the state workforce, we need to understand how privacy is defined in the policies and how we should apply these policies in our work places. This definition helps explain why sometimes we can share highly-sensitive PII as part of our work related role and or duties; however, there are times with it is not appropriate. As you put the privacy policies into practice, focusing on "appropriate use given the circumstances" will help you make the best decisions.

Review the WV Executive Branch Privacy Policies [here](#).

Note: Your agency/bureau/department/division may have specific requirements – always check your policies and procedures. If you have questions, contact your Privacy Officer.