

STATE OF MAINE
POLICY ON OUTLOOK PROFILE PICTURES AND USE OF PRONOUNS ON MAINE
STATE GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

I. Policy Statement

The State of Maine strives to maintain a professional work environment that does not discriminate in any way on the basis of gender, gender identity, or gender expression. This Policy is designed to create a professional, safe, and productive work environment for all employees.

This Policy sets forth the requirements for using certain features in Microsoft Office 365. Specifically, this Policy sets out the requirements for employees who choose to upload a Profile Picture and who choose to use the Pronouns feature on Microsoft Teams.

II. Definitions

“Gender” means the gender-related identity, appearance, mannerisms, or other gender-related characteristics of an individual, regardless of the individual’s assigned sex at birth.

“Gender Expression” means the manner in which an individual’s gender identity is expressed, including, but not limited to, through dress, appearance, manner, speech, or lifestyle, whether or not that expression is different from that traditionally associated with that individual’s assigned sex at birth.

“Gender Identity” means a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else such as agender, binary, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, or nonbinary. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. All people have a gender identity.

“Gender Non-Conforming” means people who have, or are perceived to have, gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations.

“Transgender” is an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from their sex assigned at birth. A person whose sex assigned at birth was female but who identifies as male is a transgender man.

III. Policy on Outlook Profile Pictures

One of the features in Microsoft Office 365 is the opportunity to add a profile picture to your Office account. It is not mandatory that you use this feature but, if you choose to use it, it must be used professionally.

The purpose of this feature is to allow email recipients to “put a face to the name.” It is not intended for employees to express themselves by using, for example, pictures of their pets or other “clip art” images. For this reason, only a professional image of the employee connected with the account may be used.

- Profile pictures should be a “headshot” (taken from the shoulders up) and not include other individuals.
- If attire is visible in the profile picture, it must be appropriate to the workplace.
- Pet pictures, scenery pictures, character pictures, cartoons, etc. are not acceptable profile pictures.

Computer systems, equipment, and maine.gov email accounts issued to employees are the property of Maine State Government and are provided for authorized Maine State Government use only. Your profile picture, therefore, should represent the position you hold in State Government. An employee whose profile picture fails to meet the guidelines under this policy will be asked to remove the non-compliant picture. **Failure to remove / update the profile picture may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Nothing in this policy limits disciplinary action against an employee whose profile picture violates a different State policy (e.g. Policy Against Harassment).**

IV. Policy on use of Pronouns

Another feature in Microsoft Office 365 is to add chosen pronouns to Microsoft Teams. The use of preferred pronouns allows employees to better express their gender identity during virtual meetings using this platform. This is true both of individuals whose gender matches what was assigned at birth and employees who are transgender or gender non-conforming.

Employees are not required to use this feature, but if they choose to, it must be done solely to express the employee’s gender identity. Generally acceptable pronouns include, but are not limited to, He/Him; She/Her; They/Them; and “neopronouns” such as Ze/Zir; Xe/Xem; Ey/Em. This Policy recognizes that gender expression and the language used will continue to change.

The misuse of this feature is strictly prohibited and may result in discipline, up to and, including termination. Misuse includes putting pronouns that do not match your gender expression, making derogatory statements or jokes (including pronouns that do not match your gender expression), and using other terms that may be viewed as derogatory or offensive.

The State of Maine has adopted a Policy Against Harassment and supports that all employees have the right to express their gender identity. Employees who misuse this feature may violate this Policy and the Policy Against Harassment. The State of Maine has also adopted an EEO Complaint Procedure, and employees who become aware of misuse of this feature are encouraged to make a report to their supervisor, manager, Department's EEO Coordinator, Human Resources Office, or State EEO Coordinator. Note that pursuant to the State's Policy Against Harassment, supervisors and managers are required to report any concerns to the Department's EEO Coordinator, Human Resources Office, or to the State EEO Coordinator for appropriate action.

V. Effective Date

The effective date of this policy is June 10, 2024