Please read ENTIRE document before creating or using Groups.

WHAT ARE Groups?
Microsoft recently added a new feature called "Groups" in Office 365. **Groups** appears as a new menu item in the left hand side of the screen below the **Folders** menu items when using Outlook Web Access (OWA) to connect to Office 365 (http://Office365.MontgomeryCountyMD.gov). The Groups menu item is not available in Outlook when using a locally installed version of Office.

BENEFITS OF Groups
The Groups feature enables an individual user with a County e-mail account to:
- Create a new Group. Members can include any individual with a County e-mail account.
- Participate in Group conversations via a Group "Conversation" page in OWA. Posts to the Group Conversation page also appear as e-mails to Group members in Outlook.
- Share documents and files with the Group, using the "Files" option.
- Collaborate on documents. Note: all Group members can edit the same document at the same time when using OWA.
- Create and view Group events via a shared Group Calendar.

DO'S & DON'TS OF Groups
DO   use Groups to collaborate on short term projects or initiatives with Group members. Examples include brainstorming ideas for submission for an award or collaborating on a theme for an upcoming County event.

DON'T   use Groups as a data repository for long-term projects or ongoing business processes, or an automated process to submit information for review and approval (a workflow). DTS, in collaboration with Department IT staff, is in the process of implementing another online service called "Team Sites" that is designed for longer-term data storage, workflows, and storage of more sensitive information. Look for more information on this service soon.

DO   be sure to mark the correct "public" or "private" setting for the Group and note the following:
- Groups can only be marked "public" or "private" when created. **It cannot be changed later.**
- **All content** in a **"public"** Group – Conversations, Files, Calendar events, and Notebook entries – **can be seen by anyone with a County e-mail account**, including some County contractors, volunteers, and interns.
- For Groups marked "private," only the Group members can see information in Group Conversations, Files, Calendar events, and the Notebook.
- Although Microsoft's default setting for a new Group is "public," the **"public" setting should be the exception, not the rule.** If any data or communication between Group members is confidential, must be kept secure, or on a "need to know" basis, the Group creator must mark the Group private. **Inappropriate selection of the public or private setting could open the County to liability under many privacy laws for failure to adequately secure sensitive information.**
- Any user can see who the Group members are, regardless of the "public" or "private" Group selection.

DO use the required naming convention for Groups.

- **The County naming convention for Groups requires that the Group name start with an underscore ("_").** Any Groups that are non-compliant with the naming convention will be renamed automatically by DTS.
- **Anyone creating a Group must choose a name that is specific and unique.** Office 365 Groups appear in the County's Outlook Global Address List, and any staff can send messages to the Group (whether or not they are members of the Group).

DON'T delete a Group unless any data still needed has been copied to another site. There is no "recycle bin" for Groups. Once a Group Administrator deletes the Group, all data stored in Group Conversations, Files, or Calendars cannot be recovered.

DO follow existing County policies and procedures governing data retention and preservation, as they apply to data stored with Groups. Remember, **if a litigation hold is in place for any data relevant to a pending claim against the County, the Group Files, Calendar events, Notebook, and Conversations must be preserved pending resolution of the litigation.**

DO keep in mind that data entered into Groups could be a public record subject to production under the Maryland Public Information Act.

NEED HELP?

For additional information regarding Groups, please go to the County's Office 365 information page: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/office365.

If you have any questions or need help with Office 365, please contact the IT Help Desk at 240-777-2828 or HelpIT@montgomerycountymd.gov.