Password Creation Standards

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 545

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Information System Security
Password Creation Standards
for Users

The USAID CISO has established the following password standards that meet the federal requirements for passwords established by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Federal Information Processing Standard Publication 112, subsequent regulations, and industry best practices. The USAID CISO has established these standards that you must apply to all USAID information systems to which you have access privileges.

You must create passwords that meet the following complexity criteria.

- Passwords must be at least (8) characters in length.

- Passwords must contain characters from three (3) of the four (4) character types:
  - Uppercase (ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWYXZ),
  - Lowercase (abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwyxz),
  - Symbols* (,./`~<?;':"[]{}\|!@#$%^&*()-=_+) and,
  - Numbers (0123456789).

- Passwords must not contain any portion of your full user name.

- Passwords must not contain any words of four (4) characters or more.

- You must generate passwords that conform to the password standards.

- Passwords do not have an indefinite life and must be changed at least once every 90 days. If you do not change the password once the maximum lifetime is reached, the security controls may notify you and/or the System Administrator, Functional Manager, or the ISSO that the password has been invalidated.

- You must protect your password to prevent unauthorized access, modification, or disclosure.

- Passwords must not be written down or insecurely stored. When required, passwords must be written down and stored within a secured, locked container (i.e., a safe).

- If requested by the ISSO, the Functional Manager or the System Administrator, you must change your password.

- If you suspect that your password has been compromised, you must first change your password and then notify your System Administrator, Functional Manager, or ISSO.

*Symbols vary by operating system and application. Some symbols designate meta-characters, instructions, or delimiters that are reserved by the operating system or application.