

## **Social Media Policy**

### **1.0 Purpose**

The County of Bladen endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this County's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

### **2.0 Policy**

Social Media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the County and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The County also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some County personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on County personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by County Personnel.

### **3.0 Definitions**

<b>Blog:</b>	A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Weblog."
<b>Page:</b>	The specific portion of a social media website where contents is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
<b>Post:</b>	Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
<b>Profile:</b>	Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
<b>Social Media:</b>	A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (FaceBook, My Space), micro blogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, You Tube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).
<b>Social Networks:</b>	Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
<b>Speech:</b>	Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communications.

## **Social Media Policy**

**Web 2.0:** The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

**Wiki:** Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

### **4.0 ON THE JOB USE – County-Sanctioned Presence**

#### **4.1 Determining Strategy**

- Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency’s presence on the website.
- Where possible, the page(s) should link to the County’s official website.
- Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s).

#### **4.2 Procedures**

**4.2.1** All County social media sites or pages shall be administered within each individual department or as otherwise determined.

**4.2.2** Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the County and shall County contact information prominently displayed.

**4.2.3** Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

- All privacy settings should be set to public.
- Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
- Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the County.

**4.2.4** Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the County reserves the right to remove obscenities, “off topic” comments, and personal attacks.

**4.2.5** Representatives of the County communicate via the website. Consequently any communication via this site (whether by a government employee or the general public) may be subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties.

## **Social Media Policy**

### **5.0 ON THE JOB USE – County-Sanctioned Use**

- 5.1** County employees shall identify and conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the County and accordingly, shall adhere to all County standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
- 5.2** County employees shall not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to County training, activities, or work related assignments without express written permission. Adherence shall be given to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines as it relates to confidentiality.
- 5.3** Political activities or private business is prohibited.
- 5.4** Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

### **6.0 PERSONAL USE**

#### **6.1 Precautions and Prohibitions**

Barring state law, County personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:

- County personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this County for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede their performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the County.
- As public employees, County personnel are cautioned that speech on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties; that is, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities, is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the County. County personnel should resume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and this County.
- Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching a County employee's testimony in criminal proceedings. County personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination of office or position.
- County personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this County without express authorization.

## **Social Media Policy**

1. Publishing or posting false information, that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
  2. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not legitimate public concern and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
  3. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
  4. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- County personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
  - County personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the County at any time without prior notice.

### **7.0 CONCLUSION**

**It's your responsibility.** What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of the County is not a right and it therefore needs to be taken seriously and with respect. When responding, be sure you're the correct person in your department to respond. Know and follow the County's social media guidelines.

**It's a conversation.** Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. Stay professional – don't be combative.

**Are you adding value?** The best way to get your words read is to write information people will value. Communication should help our residents, employees, and community partners. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community.

**Did you mess up?** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you're posting to a social media site, you may choose to modify an earlier post – just make it clear that you have done so noting the correction.

**If it gives you pause, pause.** If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit "send." Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you are still unsure, check with your supervisor. Ultimately, the decision about what you publish is yours – as is the responsibility. So be sure.

**Social Media Policy**

**Follow the rules.** Employees who fail to comply with these policies are subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

---

**I have read, understand, and acknowledge the Bladen County Social Media Policy.**

Printed Name of Employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Department/Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Social Media Policy**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

By signing below, I am confirming that I not only have received and read the Social Media Policy but that I also understand its contents. I understand that the County of Bladen expressly reserves the right to change, modify, update or delete its provisions without immediate notice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date