

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Information Services
Policy Number: 12.05.10
Policy Name: Social Media/Social Networking

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Current Revision Date:
Approved By: Richard B. Werner *RBW*

PURPOSE: The following policy is designed to establish guidelines and procedures for the appropriate, safe, and confidential use of social media.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all CCDCFS staff.

POLICY

CCDCFS (Agency) holds all employees responsible for ensuring that any public communication, including social networking communication, does not negatively impact the reputation of the agency or in any way disparages the children and families we serve (past or present) or its partners or clients.

All Agency policies regarding confidentiality and those policies contained in the Cuyahoga County Policies and Procedures Manual should be considered when employees post any information within a social networking environment that may concern the work of the Agency, another employee or any child or family served by the Agency. Information regarding persons receiving services must never be disclosed. The privacy rights of fellow employees must also be respected. This applies to comments posted on blogs, forums, and social media platforms.

CCDCFS encourages all employees to consider the manner and the speed by which information can be relayed using technology and how such information can be misunderstood. Therefore, no one guideline or practice as outlined in this policy can handle every eventuality when dealing with social media. It is expected that staff utilize common sense, consider the Agency's mission and seek guidance when in doubt about their actions prior to posting information on a social media site.

Nothing in this policy should be construed as inhibiting an employee's right to freedom of speech, freedom of association or to engage in discussions which are related to their right to collectively bargain or associate for such purposes.

DEFINITION: Social Media: for the purposes of this policy social media shall be defined as online web-based communities that foster interaction through various means of communications such as wall-posting, chat, messaging and email. Current examples of popular online social networking sites include, but are not limited to, the following: Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, You Tube, and WordPress.

PROCEDURES

A. On-Duty Activity:

1. Employees may not use Agency owned property such as desktop computers, laptop computers, or cell phones to access or view any type of social media unless conducting approved agency business.
2. All agency-related communication through social media platforms should remain professional in nature and should always be conducted in accordance with CCDCFS policy, practices, and expectations.
3. Staff may find it helpful to use social media as a tool, for example, in locating relatives, searching for missing children, communicating with older youth in or out of care or for conducting an investigation.
4. When using social media for approved agency business, staff will:
 - a. Secure agreement from their supervisor that the use of social media is warranted.
 - b. Document in the activity log how social media was used and for what purpose, including the outcome.
 - c. Print you social media communication and include in the case file.
5. Staff will use a professional account for these purposes by creating an account using their work email address. This account will be used only for conducting approved Agency business.
6. When creating a professional social media account staff will:
 - a. Use their name, not a pseudonym.
 - b. Refrain from including any profile information on this professional account, including their place of work.
 - c. Never post any public messages on client or former client's social media sites but instead utilize private messaging or email for communication. If a situation occurs where it is necessary to post on a client's wall, obtain prior approval from your senior supervisor and deputy director.
 - d. Do not accept or extend friend requests from or to anyone.

B. Off-Duty Activity:

1. The Agency recognizes the rights of its staff to engage with social media on their personal time however, it also has a duty to balance the critical work of the Agency against any content on these sites that is posted by its staff and which may cause harm to the Agency, its reputation or its staff. Personal use of social media must be tempered by ethical guidelines and the Agency's expectation of professional conduct.
2. Personal sites must remain personal in nature and are not for sharing work-related information.
3. Staff must never use their state email account or password in conjunction with a personal social media site.
4. It is advisable to post a statement on personal social media sites, blogs and web pages that the views expressed on this web page/site/personal profile belong solely to you and are not those of your employer.

Prohibited Activities:

The following is a list of prohibited social media activities:

- a. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information related to:
 - i. Any child or family served by the Agency
 - ii. Agency operations
 - iii. Personal, confidential information of Agency staff
- b. Posting defamatory information about the Agency, its employees, or its partners.
- c. Posting of speech or actions that are harassing, threatening, or could otherwise adversely impact the workplace.
- d. Posting on behalf of the Agency without express authorization of the director.
- e. Posting information in violation of Agency policies.
- f. Commenting on the operations of the Agency or airing grievances or issues with community providers or clients that would negatively affect operations of the Agency.
- g. Posting public messages that might breach confidentiality.

- h. Using an Agency email address to register for social media sites unless conducting approved Agency business.
 - i. Any activity that could be deemed a violation of state or federal law.
 - j. "Friending" or otherwise making a personal connection with a current client except for the express purpose of providing resources or conducting Agency surveys with foster care alumni.
 - k. Posting photographs or other material which would cause harm to other employees or to the Agency.
5. An employee's presence (personal or professional) on social media and the internet can result in disciplinary actions if the content is determined to reveal an infraction of these prohibited activities or of any other state, county or federal policy.

SEE ALSO:

Cuyahoga County Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual

Cuyahoga County Code of Ethics Policy 3.01

Cuyahoga County General Standards of Ethical Conduct Policy

Cuyahoga County Workplace Harassment Policy 4.04

Cuyahoga County Inappropriate Conduct/Grounds for Discipline 13.08

DCFS Policies and Procedures Manual

DCFS Electronic Communications and Information Technology (IT) Resource Usage Policy 12.05.07

DCFS Telecommunications Policy 12.05.08

Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW),

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code>

State of Ohio Internal Policy and Procedure Manual (IPP.11002) Social Media

<http://emanuals.odjfs.state.oh.us/emanual>