



**COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
STANDARD PRACTICE**

No. 09-04 SP 1

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EFFECTIVE DATE 03/19/2021

POLICY: INTERNET/INTRANET USE
SP: Social Media

APPROVED
LEONARD X. HERNANDEZ
Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE

It is the policy of the County to make effective and productive use of the Internet and the County Intranet ("Internet"), and to support the deployment and use of Internet technology by Departments.

The County embraces its responsibility to reach out to the public with information about County government and local emergencies and provide the public with opportunities to communicate with the County.

Social Media Services are a means by which the County can instantly and directly exchange, publish, distribute or disclose information with the public. The County encourages the coordinated, responsible, consistent, effective, and appropriate use of social media by County departments and agencies as an effective means by which to engage the public.

This standard practice establishes the responsibilities and procedures for all County use of social media to ensure that it is permitted within the parameters of County Policies.

DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED

Board of Supervisors, Elected Officials, all County Agencies and Departments, Board-Governed Special Districts, and Board-Governed Entities.

DEFINITIONS

Content – Is the textual, visual, or aural material that is encountered as part of the user experience on websites and social media services; including but not limited to: text, images, sounds, video and animation.

Social Media – Interactive, internet-based technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of user-generated content of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

Social Media Services – Electronic communication tools, applications, and systems that facilitate online social interaction, including but not limited to: blogs, bookmarking sites, bulletin boards, chat rooms, content-sharing sites, e-publications, podcasts, public forums, social networks, weblogs and wikis. Examples of such services and/or applications in common use at the time this Standard Practice was adopted include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Pinterest, Flickr, Tumblr, WordPress, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn. Additionally, business, government, and special interest groups may create intranet systems to facilitate networking within closed groups.

County social media – A social media site, account or platform created and maintained by the County in accordance with County policy.

Personal social media – A social media site, account or platform created and maintained by a County employee on their own personal time and equipment, or on County equipment in compliance with the County's Internet/Intranet Use Policy, as opposed to County social media.

Required Disclaimer – A Section of this Standard Practice – including the purpose and rules of County Social Media, Terms of Use and Privacy Policy consistent with applicable law – to be posted on the County's main public website and on all County Social Media when possible.

Public-generated Content – All content, including posts and comments, that is created and distributed by the public through County social media accounts and platforms.

PROCEDURES

County departments and agencies are encouraged but not required to use social media to engage their customers as appropriate. Before engaging in social media, departments and agencies should consider their goals, legal issues, technical capabilities, ability to comply with this Standard Practice, and potential benefits and risks.

General Provisions:

1. County departments and agencies utilizing social media shall ensure their use of social media complies with all applicable laws (e.g., California Penal Code Section 502 (c)), ordinances, and policies.
2. Any social media presence created before the effective date of this Standard Practice must comply with its provisions and procedures within 30 days of the effective date of this Standard Practice.
3. All County social media are to be considered extensions of the County's information network and thus the same laws, policies, and professional expectations for interacting as a County employee with the public using electronic media apply when using social media.
4. County social media must be utilized only for the purpose of conducting official County business.
5. The County's main website shall include a directory of, and links to, all County social media and the Required Disclaimer.
6. Social Media Services that do not permit pre-approval of public-generated content or offer immediate notification when public-generated content has been posted shall not be utilized by the County.

Planning and Strategy:

Before a County presence can be established on any social media site, a department must:

1. Define the need for and purpose of the social media presence.
2. Identify personnel to manage the presence and communicate on the department's behalf.
3. Secure written approval from the Department Director and the County Public Information Officer.

Creation, Design and Implementation:

In order to establish a County presence on a social media platform, a department must:

1. Use a County email address when creating an account. Whenever possible, this County email address shall be a generic email address, as opposed to an individual employee's email address, messages to which are forwarded to the personnel responsible for maintaining the social media account.
2. Use consistent branding, including the use of logos, avatars, and colors as specified in the current County Brand Style Book.
3. Include a link to the County's main website and optionally to the department's website within the social media platform whenever possible.
4. Include the County's Required Disclaimer or a link to the Required Disclaimer within the social media platform whenever possible.
5. Choose the option to pre-approve public-generated content, and if this option is not available choose to be immediately notified of public-generated content. If neither option is available, the social media platform may not be utilized.

Maintenance:

In order to ensure a successful social media presence, a department must:

1. Notify the County Public Information Officer or his/her designate upon the launch of/participation in a social media platform.
2. Departments to designate personnel to regularly monitor the information created, exchanged, published or distributed for all social media under their purview.

3. Delegate responsibility for management of County Social Media to an employee with an appropriate level of authority to keep approval levels to a minimum while effectively and efficiently pursuing the principles of this Policy.
4. Ensure that all user account information (login, email and password) is known by and accessible to the person assigned to manage the social media presence and the Department Director.
5. Passwords must comply with County and department password policies, whichever is most restrictive.
6. Immediately remove or change the access credentials to the account when a person separates from the County or is otherwise no longer authorized to access the social media account.
7. Update the County social media as often as necessary to ensure that posted information is current and accurate. An unmaintained social media presence or one that contains outdated and/or incorrect information compromises the public's confidence in all County social media and the County itself. Departments are solely responsible for the diligent maintenance and monitoring of all County social media under their purview.
8. Respond in a timely manner to public-generated content, such as comments and questions.
9. Monitor public-generated content and remove prohibited content from public view in a timely manner.
10. Unused or under-utilized County social media accounts shall be promptly deactivated by the departments that created them.
11. All County social media content, including postings, messages, comments, and responses is subject to and shall be retained in accordance with the California Public Records Act and all County policies and codes pertaining to record management, maintenance, and retention, and shall be accessible in response to requests for information. This includes any content removed from public view.

It is preferable that only designated County employees have access to and the ability to post information to County social media. However, departments may contract with a vendor to create and maintain social media on the department's behalf, and grant such vendors access to and the ability to post information to the department's social media, provided the department pre-approves all content and actively monitors the vendor's activity to ensure compliance with County policies and this Standard Practice.

1. Any such vendor shall demonstrate experience with and competency in the establishment and use of social media prior to performing social media services on the County's behalf.
2. Departments must maintain access to passwords and other login information and have the ability to alter or delete vendor postings to County social media when necessary.
3. Passwords and other access information shall be changed immediately upon termination of a contract in which a vendor has access to County social media.

CONTENT

1. Those authorized to post content on the County's behalf shall not express their personal views through such postings.
2. County-generated social media content shall:
 - a. Be appropriate for viewing by the general public.
 - b. Use proper grammar.
 - c. Use plain language written at or below a high-school reading level.
 - d. Be factual and appropriately reviewed.
 - e. Be corrected in a timely manner in the event of errors or misrepresentations.
 - f. Be free of jargon and obscure first-reference acronyms (Clear abbreviations within character-limited social media posts are acceptable.).
 - g. Avoid promoting a personal view or opinion of the user.
3. The following is not permitted on County social media and, if posted, shall be promptly edited or removed from public view. Content that:
 - a. Is prohibited by Policy 07-01, Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation.
 - b. Appears to be politically motivated.

- c. Is harmful to children, threatening, abusive, harassing, tortious, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful or racially, ethnically, or otherwise objectionable
 - d. Discloses confidential information, personally identifiable information, or protected health information that the poster does not have the right to disclose
 - e. Constitutes a commercial solicitation or advertising
 - f. Infringes any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright or other proprietary rights of any person or entity
 - g. Encourages or promotes criminal conduct
 - h. Compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems
 - i. Constitutes as Spam (unsolicited bulk messages)
 - j. Links to websites associated with prohibited content
 - k. Links to non-County websites that have not been approved by the County Public Information Officer
 - l. Comments on issues not pertaining to matters within the County's jurisdiction
 - m. Is submitted anonymously or under false name
 - n. Is false or misleading information
 - o. Is otherwise deemed by the County to be in violation of applicable laws, ordinances or County policies.
4. The County reserves the right to restrict or remove from public view any content it deems to be in violation of County Policy and this Standard Practice.
 5. Posted content that is not prohibited by the Required Disclaimer or any other provision of this Standard Practice may not be edited or removed from public view as it constitutes protected free speech.
 6. The County retains full permission and rights to any content posted to County social media platforms, including photographs and video.
 7. Sharing or posting of content owned by others shall be performed in accordance with copyright, fair use, and established laws pertaining to materials owned by others. This includes, but is not limited to, quotes, images, photographs, documents, links and videos. Such content must always be attributed to its owner and/or linked back to the original content when possible.

USE OF COUNTY AND PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA BY COUNTY EMPLOYEES

1. Departments must ensure County employee use of County resources to access non-County social media complies with County Policy 09-04, Internet/Intranet Use.
2. County email addresses may not be used for the establishment of personal social media accounts or platforms.
3. Departments shall make their employees who engage in personal use of social media aware that they are responsible for what they post online and that any conduct that adversely impacts the employee's work performance, the performance of co-workers, or otherwise adversely impacts other County employees, customers, vendors, people who work on the County's behalf, or the County's legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. As such, departments should strongly urge their employees who engage in the personal use of social media to adhere to the following rules and guidelines:
 - a. Understand that everything posted on all Social Media Services will likely exist in some form in perpetuity. Assume anything posted on any social media platform can be seen by anyone at any time.
 - b. County Personnel Rules; the County Code of Ethics contained therein; Policy 07-01 Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation; Policy 13-07 Violence and Threats

- in the Workplace – Zero Tolerance; and other County policies apply to all use of social media on County and personal Social Media Services. Personal social media postings that violate these policies may subject employees to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- c. County employees may not lead others to believe they are communicating on the County's behalf unless expressly authorized to do so by the County.
 - d. County employees shall not share or cause to be shared on County or personal social media confidential information obtained within the course of employment with the County.
 - e. County employees shall not use County resources to create or maintain social media platforms or content that falls into the prohibited content category of this Standard Practice.
4. The County prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible violation of this Standard Practice or for cooperating in an investigation. Retaliating against an employee for reporting a possible violation of this Standard Practice or for cooperating in an investigation will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 5. Individuals who are members of bodies subject to the Ralph M. Brown California Open Meetings Act shall avoid using social media to engage in unlawful serial meetings by sharing viewpoints or positions on matters that might come before them via "likes", "shares", "retweets", or other social media communications and postings.

REQUIRED DISCLAIMER

The following Required Disclaimer shall be posted on the County's main website and on all County Social Media platforms when possible:

Disclaimer

Posted comments and images do not necessarily represent the views of the County of San Bernardino. External, non-sbcounty.gov links do not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the County of San Bernardino.

The County does not necessarily agree with or endorse each comment that individuals post on its pages. The County's purpose is to share ideas and information with as many individuals as possible and our policy is to share comments made on our platforms in accordance with the following guidelines.

Content will be deleted from public view if it contains:

1. Is harmful to children, threatening, abusive, harassing, tortious, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful or racially, ethnically, or otherwise objectionable
2. Discloses confidential information, personally identifiable information, or protected health information that the poster does not have the right to disclose
3. Constitutes a commercial solicitation or advertising
4. Infringes any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright or other proprietary rights of any person or entity
5. Encourages or promotes criminal conduct
6. Compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems
7. Constitutes spam (unsolicited bulk messages)
8. Includes links to websites
9. Pertains to matters outside of the County's jurisdiction
10. Is submitted anonymously or under a false name
11. Is false or misleading
12. Appears to conduct political campaigning
13. Includes name calling or personal attacks
14. Includes other content the County deems to be in violation of applicable laws, ordinances or County codes.

All links posted as comments will be reviewed and may be deleted from public view.

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Users warrant that they own or have permission to post the information contained in their postings, including but not limited to video, photos, or digital reproductions and that no copyright or trademark infringement has taken place due to posting on this site. Further, the County of San Bernardino does not guarantee or warrant that any information posted by users on this site is correct, and disclaims any liability whatsoever for any loss or damage resulting from any reliance on such information.

Users of this site do not retain any rights over their postings. Postings are intended for public view and any personal information posted constitutes a waiver of any rights to privacy or confidentiality.

Repeated violations of the comment policy may cause the author to be blocked from submitting additional postings.

The County understands that social media is a 24/7 medium; however, the County's moderation capabilities may be limited. The County may not immediately see each inappropriate comment, and we trust the community to ignore content that violates the standards outlined above until the County has had an opportunity to delete such content from public view.

EXCEPTIONS

Departments/offices headed by elected officials are exempt from provisions that reference County Public Information Officer review and/or approval.

LEAD DEPARTMENT

County Administrative Office



STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING and ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Standard Practice 09-04 SP1 Social Media

I have read and have received a copy of Standard Practice 09-04 SP 1, Social Media. I understand and acknowledge:

- Everything posted on social media will likely exist in some form in perpetuity and anything posted on any social media platform may potentially be seen by anyone at any time.
- Personal use of social media is the responsibility of every County employee and any conduct that adversely impacts work performance, the performance of co-workers, or otherwise adversely impacts other County employees, customers, vendors, people who work on the County's behalf, or the County's legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- County policies and rules apply to all use of social media on County and personal social media services. Personal social media postings that violate policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Communications on social media may not lead others to believe any employee is communicating on the County's behalf unless expressly authorized to do so by the County.
- Confidential information obtained within the course of employment with the County shall not be shared on County or personal social media.
- County resources should not be used to create or maintain social media platforms or content that falls into the prohibited content category of the Standard Practice.

I further acknowledge that if I do not understand any part of the Standard Practice it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my supervisor. ***Refusal to acknowledge does not exempt my compliance with these expectations.***

Acknowledging receipt of this Policy or Standard Practice will be viewed as the employee signature in this Statement of Understanding and Acknowledgement.

SIGNATURES		
Employee Signature:	Date:	IP Address: