

Sheriff's Office Use of Social Media

805.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice MODIFIED GLECP 6.1 - 1.20

[The use of social media and online platforms is responsible for disseminating information about the agency in an accurate and timely manner to the public, to the media, and other government entities.](#) This policy provides guidelines to ensure that any use of social media on behalf of the Fayette County Sheriff's Office is consistent with the office mission.

[The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Sheriff Office Public Information Officer, Citizen Engagement Specialist, or other authorized designee represents the Sheriff's Office as official spokesperson\(s\) on all matters or policies affecting the agency. This policy establishes this agency's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. Social media platforms and webpages utilized for official Sheriff's Office use shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Fayette County Sheriff's Office and shall have agency's contact information prominently displayed or hyperlinked.](#)

This policy does not address all aspects of social media use. Specifically, it does not address:

- Personal use of social media by members (see the Speech, Expression and Social Networking Policy).
- Use of social media in personnel processes (see the Recruitment and Selection Policy).
- Use of social media as part of a criminal investigation, other than disseminating information to the public on behalf of this office (see the Investigation and Prosecution Policy).

805.1.1 DEFINITIONS

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Definitions related to this policy include:

Social media - Any of a wide array of Internet-based tools and platforms that allow for the sharing of information, such as the office website or social networking services.

Social Network/Media Sites - [Web-based services that allow individuals to create public profiles, share information and socialize with others using a range of communications technologies. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites \(Facebook, LinkedIn\), microblogging sites \(Twitter, Nixle\), photo- and video-sharing sites \(Flickr, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube\), wikis \(Wikipedia\), blogs, and news sites \(Digg, Reddit\). The absence of, or lack of explicit reference to a specific site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.](#)

Page [The specific portion of a social networking website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual within this agency.](#)

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Post Content that an individual shares on a social networking site or the act of publishing content on a page.

Speech Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

Inappropriate Comments - May include topics such as advertisements or endorsements for services or products, abusive or profane language, hate speech, personal attacks, harassment or threats of violence, libelous or slanderous statements against the Sheriff's Office or its employees, or statements that threaten the security of the Office.

805.2 POLICY

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The Fayette County Sheriff's Office will use social media as a method of effectively informing the public about office services, issues, investigations, recruitment and other relevant events.

Office members shall ensure that the use or access of social media is done in a manner that protects the constitutional rights of all.

805.3 AUTHORIZED USERS

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Only members authorized by the Sheriff or the authorized designee may utilize social media on behalf of the Office. Authorized members shall use only office-approved equipment during the normal course of duties to post and monitor office-related social media, unless they are specifically authorized to do otherwise by their supervisors.

The Sheriff may develop specific guidelines identifying the type of content that may be posted. Any content that does not strictly conform to the guidelines should be approved by a supervisor prior to posting.

Requests to post information over office social media by members who are not authorized to post should be made through the member's chain of command.

805.3.1 PIO OR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST RESPONSIBILITIES

Agency Content

The Public Information Officer or Citizen Engagement Specialist will be responsible for monitoring all social media and web platforms, along with coordinating any media inquiries.

The Public Information Officer will be on call 24 hours a day, and the name and appropriate telephone numbers of PIO staff on duty will be given to the Watch Office, Sheriff, Chief Deputy, and other appropriate personnel. When media inquiries come into the Watch Office they will notify the PIO.

The Citizen Engagement Specialist or the Public Information Officer will oversee the management, maintenance and administration of all social media platforms and pages utilized for official agency

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[use. They will approve any modifications to or expansions of the platforms and be responsible for monitoring comments posted on the Sheriff's Office's pages utilized for official use.](#)

805.4 AUTHORIZED CONTENT

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Only content that is appropriate for public release, that supports the office mission and conforms to all office policies regarding the release of information may be posted.

Examples of appropriate content include:

- (a) Announcements.
- (b) Tips and information related to crime prevention.
- (c) Investigative requests for information.
- (d) Requests that ask the community to engage in projects that are relevant to the office mission.
- (e) Real-time safety information that is related to in-progress crimes, geographical warnings or disaster information.
- (f) Traffic information.
- (g) Press releases.
- (h) Recruitment of personnel.

805.4.1 ON-THE-JOB USE

Agency Content

[Sheriff's Office authorized page or site:](#)

- (a) [The Sheriff or Chief Deputy will designate members of the agency who have the authority to create an official website or page on a social network or site.](#)
- (b) [Pictures and links are allowed as long as they are beneficial to the agency.](#)
- (c) [Content is subject to public records laws and relevant records retention schedules apply to content posted on the page or site. All content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.](#)

805.4.2 INCIDENT-SPECIFIC USE

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In instances of active incidents where speed, accuracy and frequent updates are paramount (e.g., crime alerts, public safety information, traffic issues), the Public Information Officer or the authorized designee will be responsible for the compilation of information to be released, subject to the approval of the Incident Commander.

805.5 PROHIBITED CONTENT

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The Fayette County Sheriff's Office social media presence intends to create a safe space for open discussion and interaction with the agency. In order to foster an engaging environment, the agency reserves the right to restrict or prohibit inappropriate content or comments that:

~~Content that is prohibited from posting includes, but is not limited to:~~

- (a) Are threatening, discriminatory, obscene, derogatory, profane or hateful abusive, inflammatory, or sexually explicit. ~~Content that is abusive, discriminatory, inflammatory or sexually explicit.~~
- (b) Any information that violates individual rights, including confidentiality and/or privacy rights and those provided under state, federal or local laws.
- (c) Any information that could compromise an ongoing investigation.
- (d) Any information that could tend to compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation or professionalism of the Fayette County Sheriff's Office or its members.
- (e) Any information that could compromise the safety and security of office operations, members of the Office, victims, suspects or the public.
- (f) Any content posted for personal use.
- (g) Any content that has not been properly authorized by this policy or a supervisor.
- (h) Off-topic posts or repetitive posts that are copied and pasted or automated.
- (i) Personal information including, but not limited to, identification numbers, phone numbers, emails, or medical information.

Any member who becomes aware of the content on this Office's social media site that they believes is unauthorized or inappropriate should promptly report such content to a supervisor. The supervisor will ensure its removal from public view and investigate the cause of the entry.

The Office reserves the right to ban or block repeat offenders from interacting with our social media account and pages that the platforms allow.

805.5.1 PUBLIC POSTING PROHIBITED

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Office social media sites shall be designed and maintained to prevent posting of content by the public.

The Office may provide a method for members of the public to contact office members directly.

The public has the right to respond to the agency's content but is subject to removal as addressed within Prohibited Content section of this policy.

805.6 MONITORING CONTENT

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The Sheriff will appoint a supervisor to review, at least annually, the use of office social media and report back on, at a minimum, the resources being used, the effectiveness of the content, any unauthorized or inappropriate content and the resolution of any issues. Content will be monitored and the agency reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and person attacks.

805.7 SHERIFF'S OFFICE BRANDING

Agency Content

Employees will observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions when creating agency materials.

- (a) Members must follow the colors, fonts, and editing styles set by the agency whenever creating any type of media, which includes graphics, videos, photos, flyers, clothing, stickers, and logos.
- (b) The agency's seal must not be altered in any way without permission of the Sheriff.
- (c) The colors of the Sheriff's Office may not be altered or changed when creating branding materials.

805.8 RETENTION OF RECORDS

Best Practice MODIFIED

The Support Services Division Director should work with the Custodian of Records along with the ~~Fayette County~~ Public Information Officer and Citizen Engagement Specialist to establish a method of ensuring that public records generated in the process of social media use which would include documentation of the Sheriff's Office Social Network and Media Sites are retained in accordance with established records retention schedules.

805.9 TRAINING

Best Practice MODIFIED

Authorized members should receive training that, at a minimum, addresses legal issues concerning the appropriate use of social media sites, as well as privacy, civil rights, dissemination and retention of information posted on office sites.

In coordination with the Training Coordinator, the Public Information Officer or Citizen Engagement Specialist will provide training on how to use social media platforms, Sheriff's website, Sheriff's app, or how to coordinate media inquiries with anyone who is likely to interact with these platforms. Only those members with proper training will be authorized to access these platforms.