

# **Developing a Professional & Ethical Online Presence for Social Work Practice**

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**Which one of these statements best reflects your relationship to technology?**

A. I feel that I get more accomplished because of technology.

B. I feel that technology makes people waste too much time.

C. I get anxious when I don't have my cell phone.

**Which one of these statements best reflects you?**

**By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of current trends and ethical standards that apply to the use of technology in social work practice.
2. Reflect on your own use of technology for personal and professional reasons.
3. Apply best practices to use of technology in social work practice.

## **Learning Objectives**

**Why do social workers  
need to be aware of  
their online,  
professional presence?**

**Why do you need to be in this session?**

- Most adults in US use social media, but varies by age and gender
- Graduate students, health professionals and helping practitioners are engaged users of social media
- Child welfare workers using social media with clients without informing supervisors (Sage & Sage, 2015)
- Personal use of social media among students doesn't translate to e-professionalism (Karpman & Drisko, 2016)
- CSWE 2015 EPAS - "Social workers understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice."

**Who is using social media in social work and how?**

- CSWE 2015 EPAS - “Social workers understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.”
- NASW’s Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice – 12 standards for Social Work Education and Continue Education
- Revisions to NASW Code of Ethics that address the use of technology in practice (2018)

**Why is this important for Social Workers & Field Educators?**

### **Authors:**

- National Association of Social Workers
- Association of Social Work Boards
- Council of Social Work Education
- Clinical Social Work Association

### **Five Sections:**

- Provision of Information to the Public (2)
- Designing and Delivering Services (27)
- Gathering, Managing and Storing Information (14)
- Social Work Education and Supervision (12)
- Glossary & Resources

# **Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice**

- **Health Information Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)**
- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
- **ASWB Model Regulatory Standards for Tech in Social Work Practice**

**Other Relevant Policies**

# **Best Practices for Professional Use of Social & Digital Technologies**

1. Develop & Manage an Online Identity
  - Monitor your accounts
  - Set-up your accounts
  - Communicate & share Professionally
2. Develop your own Professional Social Media Policy

**Professional Practice with Social & Digital Technology**

**One best practice is to self-assess one's social media accounts for the quantity and quality of content as well as basic metrics such as who is following you and who is reposting your comments.**

**There are several ways to do self-assess and we have included three examples :**

- Single Social Media Account Self- Audit
- Multiple Social Media Account Self-Audit
- Practitioner Self-Audit

**How to monitor one's Social Media Accounts:**

There are four steps to help develop and manage an online identity:

1. Assess your current online status.
2. Decide when to use your real name and image.
3. Set-up your online accounts for appropriate use.
4. Find social media platforms to fit your different roles.

Dennen (2014)

## **Developing and Managing an Online Identity**

## **Use the following guidelines to set-up your online accounts:**

- Fully Revealing = Full name and an actual photo
- Semi Revealing = First name only with actual photo or avatar
- Unrevealing = Pseudonym or avatar

(Dennen , 2014)

## **Developing and Managing an Online Identity:**

**Social workers consider the following five questions as a guide for posting information on social media:**

1. What information do you want to share?
2. Why do you want to share this information?
3. Who needs to see this information?
4. Where do you want to share this information?
5. How does the NASW Code of Ethics or other organizational policies guide sharing this information?

Kimball & Kim (2013)

**Share Professionally on Social Media**

**Additionally, the following guidelines should be considered when posting on social media:**

- Blog about your passion, but be prepared to handle comments and feedback from others.
- Be consistent and authentic with your comments. Clients and supervisors may be upset if you post content that doesn't reflect your professional role as a social worker.
- Think about which groups or causes that you want to like or endorse on social media.
- Be culturally sensitive, respectful and polite when posting.

Robb, 2011

**Share Professionally on Social Media**

These tools have the benefit of being convenient and cannot guarantee client privacy or confidentiality.

**Ethical practices include:**

1. Seek guidance from your supervisor and/or agency.
2. Obtain a client's permission to communicate via social media or texting.
3. Avoid disclosing personal health.
4. Use HIPAA or FERPA compliant communication tools
5. Always use password protection on your devices.
6. Have a plan to lock and deactivate your mobile device in the event of loss or theft.
7. Do not share your digital devices.
8. Advocate for HIPAA or FERPA compliant digital communication tools at your agency.

**Communicate Professionally via Social Media or Texting**

## **Social workers consider the following five questions as a guide for posting information on social media:**

1. What information do you want to share? - Consider the type of information to be shared. Is it public or private information? Text, data or images? Is it fact-based, a professional judgement or personal opinion?
2. Why do you want to share this information? - Think about the reasons for sharing this information. What are the benefits or deterrents of sharing? Is there an expected outcome from sharing this information?
3. Who needs to see this information? - This is when you consider the audience or reader. Who will read this information and how will they benefit from it? If personal, will clients or supervisors see this information?

Kimball & Kim (2013)

# **Communicate & Share Professionally on Social Media**

## **Resources that invaluable to helping social workers determine what to post on social media are:**

1. Netiquette guidelines  
(<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>)
2. NASW Code of Ethics  
(<https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>)
3. Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice  
([http://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards\\_FINAL\\_POSTING.pdf](http://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards_FINAL_POSTING.pdf))

**Communicate & Share Professionally on Social Media**

# **Why you need a professional social media policy?**

**How to write your own Social Media Policy**

## **Social Media Policies/Guidelines**

- ✓ **Outlines a Code of Conduct**
- ✓ **Discusses Best Practices**
- ✓ **Makes Recommendations**

**What are social media policies?**

In considering the salient points in this document I relied on the following resources to guide me:

NASW Code of the Ethics

NASW & ASWB Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice

UA Social Media Guidelines

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

- **Privacy and confidentiality**
- **Boundaries**
- **Friending**
- **Use of Search Engines**
- **E-mail**

Full policy available at: <http://www.laureliversonhitchcock.org/2016/02/12/my-guidelines-for-using-digital-social-tech-in-the-classroom-and-beyond/>

## **Allison's Social Media Policy**

## **My policy addresses the following ethical concerns:**

- Maintain and model virtual boundaries
- Keep information and content private and confidential
- Promote integrity and accountability
- Be accessible and model professional digital communication

## **Here are some course and classroom specific guidelines for students:**

- What is okay in the classroom?
- What is not okay in the classroom?
- What is the best way to use email as part of this course?
- What is the best way to use text messages as part of this course?

Full policy available at: <http://www.laureliversonhitchcock.org/2016/02/12/my-guidelines-for-using-digital-social-tech-in-the-classroom-and-beyond/>

# **Laurel's Social Media Policy**

# How to write your own Social Media Policy

## Consider the following questions:

- What sources or standards do you need to consider?
- Who are you informing with your policy?
- What ethical concerns does your policy need to address?
- How do you want to engage in common online activities?

## Resources:

- Professional Social Media Policy Worksheet
- Social Media Policy Checklist for Social Workers Worksheet

# Professional Social Media Policy

**To obtain your free copy of the *Social Media Toolkit for Social Work Field Educators*, please register here:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SoMeToolkit>

### **Why Register?**

- Track who is using the *Toolkit* and how
- Feedback for updating the *Toolkit*

**We will not share your information with anyone else.**

**Professional Social Media Policy**

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