

# Iowa County Government Social Media Use Policy

This policy outlines appropriate use of social media, as it relates to Iowa County, by employees and departments for official and personal use. This policy is to be used in conjunction with other Iowa County Policies.

## Policy Authorization

Department	Review Date	Revision Date
County Administration		
Information Technology		
Employee Relations		
Corporation Counsel		

## Executive Summary

The following Iowa County Social Media Use Policy has been adopted to establish practical, reasonable and enforceable guidelines by which Iowa County employees can conduct responsible, constructive social media engagement in official capacities.

This policy promotes a safe environment for employees to share subject matter expertise in a manner that will benefit the residents of Iowa County. This policy prepares Iowa County Government to utilize social media channels to help each other and the communities served, particularly in the event of a crisis, disaster or emergency and will protect Iowa County Government and employees from violating Municipal, State or Federal rules, regulations or laws through social media channels.

This policy will provide guidelines for work, personal and general social media usage within Iowa County Government. Open records laws and guidelines relating to social media use in government are also identified. Specific authorized social media sites and usage guidelines for these particular sites are also outlined. Employer monitoring, reporting of violations and discipline for any identified violations are also included within this policy.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

Iowa County recognizes that emerging online collaboration platforms are fundamentally changing the way citizens, government entities, and businesses interact with each other. The County has determined that online discourse through social computing may facilitate the efficient delivery of County services and foster positive public perception and a sense of community.

### I. Purpose

This policy is intended to provide a framework for use of social media when authorized by the County as part of an employee’s job duties. This policy also provides general guidelines for the personal use of social media by all employees.

The forms of social media or technology referred to in this policy include, but are not limited to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or other similar forms of online journals, diaries or personal newsletters not affiliated with Iowa County.

County-owned technology resources are the property of Iowa County, as is all data created, entered, received, stored, or transmitted via County-owned equipment. All use of social media or similar technology is subject to all County policies, including but not limited to the Information Technology Use policy, as well as any existing internet, email, and harassment policies. Employees may be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge for conduct that violates County policies or rules and regulations, whether such conduct occurs on duty or off-duty. Please refer to each of these policies for additional information.

## II. Changes to This Policy

Iowa County may modify this Social Media Use Policy to reflect legal, technological and other developments. A current copy of this document can be found on the Iowa County Government Website at [www.iowacounty.org](http://www.iowacounty.org).

## III. Definitions

The following definitions relate to terms as used within the context of this policy.

**Social Media** - a means of interactions among people in which they may create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

**Blog** - discussion or informational forum published on the internet and consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order.

**Facebook** – social media network found at Facebook.com

**Twitter** – social media network found at twitter.com

**Spam** - unsolicited bulk messages, especially advertising, indiscriminately sent to any number of recipients

**Social Media Site** – Any platform on which to build social networks or social relations for the sharing of information of common interest

## IV. Work Related Social Media Guidelines

The work related use of social media can range from passive review of social media profiles for informational or investigative purposes, to the authoring of content through a department sponsored social media account. Any such work related use must be approved by an employee's manager. The following conditions also apply to such use:

- 1) Employees are not permitted to use social media, blogging, or similar technology during working hours or at any time on County computers or other County-supplied devices, unless specifically authorized to do so as part of employee's job responsibilities.
- 2) Employees authorized to publish content to a department sponsored social media site shall be designated as social media representatives and such designation shall be made by the employee's Department Director with notice to the Information Technology Director.
- 3) Employees may only establish official sites, blogs, pages, or accounts in their official capacity as County staff on a social media site with the authorization of their Department Director. Notification of all new official Social Media sites must be provided to the County Administrator and the Information

Technology Director. All County authorized social media sites are to be sponsored by a County agency or department and the content of such site will become the responsibility of that department and its management.

4) Permission to author content on County authorized social media sites will only be granted to those employees who are authorized to speak on behalf of the County via these electronic communications media.

5) Employees are expected to recognize the confidentiality of certain County information, and the privacy rights of employees and residents, and are prohibited from disclosing confidential, personal employee and non-employee information and any other proprietary and/or nonpublic information to which employees have access. Questions regarding whether information has been released publicly or doubts regarding the propriety of any release, shall be directed to the employee's supervisor before releasing the information.

6) When communicating electronically, employees are expected to speak respectfully about the County and County-related matters, and limited to items to which the employee is authorized to speak and identify themselves and their role with the County.

7) Employees are expected to follow copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws when using on-line communications. Note that the unauthorized use of copyrighted materials, unfounded or derogatory statements, or misrepresentation, can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

8) Employees acting on behalf of the County may not publish content to any website or social media application that is unrelated to subjects associated with their position with the County. When writing about County matters try to add value and provide worthwhile information and perspective.

9) Honor the privacy rights of our current employees by seeking their permission and the permission of their Department Director before writing about or displaying internal happenings that involve the employee.

10) Employees should not cite or reference County contractors or suppliers without their approval. Care should be taken to not promote one contractor over another or provide preferential treatment of any kind.

11) Authorized social media sites are not be used to express a political view point or endorse a political candidate.

12) Be aware of your association with the County and that at all times you serve as an ambassador of the County.

## V. General Social Media Site Guidelines for Authorized Sites

All County social media sites must be sponsored by a department. The department must include a link to this site from their departmental home page and the County's official social media directory, on the Iowa County's official website.

The sponsoring department will be responsible for all management of an authorized social media site and it is the department director's responsibility to maintain compliance with this policy and all other applicable policies or laws in the management of their social media site(s).

The accuracy, quality and timeliness of all content on an authorized social media site are the responsibility of the sponsoring department. Likewise, the authorization of the appropriate staff to maintain such a site is also the responsibility of the sponsoring department.

When creating an Iowa County social media site, page, etc., all departments and employees should adhere to the following Guidelines:

- 1) Appropriate use: All communications carried out on County equipment or County sponsored electronic media must adhere to the appropriate use guidelines set forth in the Information Technology Use policy.
- 2) Encourage one-way communication when possible. Use of two-way communication is permitted in cases where limiting the application to one way communication would reduce or negate the value of the social media application.
- 3) All official Iowa County social media sites will include a disclaimer similar to the following: *"The information provided herein is provided as a courtesy and for informational purposes only. Please contact the listed media contact for this (site, page, etc.) to confirm the accuracy of the information found here. Content on this site is not to be construed as a legal notice."*
- 4) Comment Policy: Any County authorized social media site which allows comments to be posted must display the following comment policy:

*The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in the County of Iowa including information regarding its many residents, businesses and visitors. We encourage you to submit comments, but be advised this is not an open public forum. Once posted, the County reserves the right, but assumes no obligation to delete submissions that are illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, invade privacy, or which are considered to be offensive to anyone or may infringe upon the intellectual property or copy rights of others. The County does not necessarily review all posted comment on a regular basis. Furthermore, the County reserves the right to delete any comment for any reason and will immediately delete any comments that include: spam or links to other sites; are clearly off topic; advocate illegal or illicit activity; promote particular products, services or vendors; infringe on copyrights or trademarks; or advocate for a particular political party, candidate or point of view. Comments expressed on this site do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Iowa County or its employees. Iowa County takes no responsibility nor assumes any liability for any content posted on this site. Please contact the site administrator for assistance with a comment you believe violates the above policy.*

If the particular social media technology does not provide space for the above, a link from the social media application or user profile to the Social Media Use Policy page on the Iowa County website is to be provided.

Departments are required to enforce this policy and verify that all posts comply with these guidelines:

- a) No spam
- b) No off topic posts
- c) Promotion of illegal activity prohibited
- d) Copyrighted or licensed material prohibited
- e) Promotion of political organization prohibited
- f) Promotion of products or services prohibited
- g) Personal attacks prohibited
- h) Personal protected information prohibited
- i) Violent, obscene or discriminatory comments prohibited
- j) Repetitive posts prohibited

5) Administrative Structure: any County authorized social media site will require the following:

a) Assigned administrator: this person will be responsible to see to it that the use of the social media site adheres to this policy and all related County policies. The name of the site administrator must be filed with a request for an authorized social media site.

b) Backup administrator: to prevent issues related to site administration during the absence of the site administrator, all authorized sites must have a named backup administrator also to be filed as part of the request for an authorized site. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring department manager to update this information should authorized personnel change.

c) Approved content authors: sponsoring departments must authorize all employee content authors for their departmental social media site.

6) Notification to Administration: The County Administrator's office is to be made aware of any and all Department sponsored social media sites, to include the following information:

- a) Site Address

b) Purpose of Site

c) Administrator of site

d) Type of communication, one-way, two-way moderated, open two-way

7) Required elements of a County authorized social media page: technology permitting, all County sanctioned social media sites should contain the following information in a prominent place on the site:

a) County Department clearly identified

b) Comment policy

c) Stated purpose of page

d) Notification that violations of comment policy will result in blocking user

e) Disclaimer – See Section IV

f) Official contact for page

8) Prohibited content: The following types of content are prohibited on County sponsored social media sites:

a) Political opinions or endorsements, campaign adds or links to any such content

b) Content that may be considered offensive

c) Content not related to the stated purpose of the particular social media site

## **VI. Open Records**

Open Records requirements are mandated by the State of Wisconsin. Each department utilizing a social media presence is responsible to ensure compliance with all applicable open records laws. The following guidelines are intended to assist departments in maintaining such compliance:

1) It is recommended that County social media authors use only existing material from existing County web pages or previously published documents.

2) Content exclusive to a department's social media site should be captured and saved in an archival copy.

3) Copies of all content removed from the site are to be retained in an archival copy.

4) Do not use social media as medium for conducting government business.

5) Technology permitting, it is recommended that a backup of the entire site be captured and retained on a regular basis.

If you have questions as to applicability of open records law to specific content, or a particular use case, it is recommended that you contact your Department Head so that the Corporation Counsel can be consulted prior to posting the information or utilizing social media.

## **VII. Personal use of Social Media**

Iowa County respects the right of employees to use social media and does not discourage employees from self-publishing, self-expression and public conversation and does not discriminate against employees who use these mediums for personal interests and affiliations or other lawful purposes. Employees are expected to follow the guidelines and policies set forth to provide a clear line between you as the individual and you as the employee of Iowa County.

- 1) Employees cannot use employer-owned equipment, including computers, County-licensed software or other electronic equipment, facilities or County time, to conduct the personal use of social media.
- 2) Employees are personally responsible for their commentary on all social media sites and can be held personally liable for commentary that is considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous by any party.
- 3) Employees can be disciplined for any use of social media in a manner that violates County policies. Information posted on social media sites can be used by the County as evidence in disciplinary actions.
- 4) Employees are encouraged to be careful in their use of social media to avoid the appearance of using that media in an official capacity.
- 5) Employees cannot post the name, trademark or logo of the County, County-privileged information, including copyrighted information or County-issued documents, or photographs of other employees, residents, vendors or suppliers taken in their capacity as County employees.
- 6) Employees should not link from a personal social media site to the County internal or external web site without the permission of their Department Director and Information Technology Director.

## **VIII. Employer Monitoring**

Employees have no expectation of privacy while using the County's technology resources for any purpose, including authorized social media. The County monitors all such use and may withdraw content deemed to be inappropriate, outside the scope of an employee's authority, or in violation of County policy as determined by the Department Director and/or Employee Relations Department.

## **IX. Reporting Violations**

The County requests and strongly urges employees to report any violations or possible violations of this policy to their supervisor or the Employee Relations Department.

## **X. Discipline for Violations**

The County will investigate and respond to all reports of violations of this policy. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **XI. Acknowledgement**

By downloading this policy via the email link, employees acknowledge that they received, read, understand and agreed to comply with the County's social media policy and guidelines. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Information Technology Director.

### **Specific Social Media Guidelines by Medium for Authorized Sites**

This addendum provides a brief description and basic guidelines for utilizing popular social media sites in conducting County business. Due to the speed at which technologies are developed and evolve, it is impossible to provide a complete and up-to-date guide.

#### **Twitter**

Twitter is an online social networking site where members can post short updates and keep up with other members through online profiles or cell phone text messages.

Effective and approved applications for County use of Twitter would be to re-broadcast the County's Blog headlines, news releases, testimonies, statements, public service announcements, accomplishments, job announcements, and to alert citizens of emergency broadcasts, epidemics, recalls, hazardous materials incidents, national incidents, terrorists' threats and natural disasters.

Legal implications of Twitter relate primarily to the privacy of members that follow County Twitter accounts and the appearance of commercial endorsement. Restricting settings and use of follow ability can mitigate these risks.

In order to comply with the requirements of this policy, include a link from the Twitter profile to the disclaimer and comment policy on the County web page.

#### **Facebook**

Effective applications for County use of Facebook include public outreach programs that target segmented audiences, public service announcements, departmental contact information, emergency broadcasts and other public affairs activities.

Legal implications of County use of social media relate primarily to:

- 1) Copyrights of video footage and photos uploaded by County representatives. Risks can be mitigated by following these standard operating procedures:
  - a) County source materials - Use only photos and videos produced by the County or contractors working directly on behalf of the County
  - b) Obtain written copyrights - If copyrighted materials are used, be sure to get and maintain physical records of copyright licenses and honor any branding or labeling requirements specified in the copyright license.
- 2) Privacy rights of individuals who become friends, fans or followers of County sites. Social media users will follow these guidelines:
  - a) Accounts - County representatives who set up accounts should use a general office e-mail account, department name and general office phone number if possible.

b) Restrict to Find People and Follow People - County representatives should not follow private citizen or commercial profiles from within their County social networking profile. While we cannot necessarily stop all people from being Friends, Fans or Following us, we should not click onto the profiles of our Friends, Fans and Followers.

c) Comments and Discussions - When possible, disallow comments and discussions on social profiles. If it is not possible to disable this function, representatives must refrain from participating in dialogue and online discussions with social profile visitors. Exemption: Sites that are used to disseminate information during times of emergency or disaster would be exempt from this rule. Comments can be crucial to dissemination of information and correcting rumors.

3) Accessibility rights are governed by Section 508 compliance and web accessibility for people with visual and hearing disabilities. Social media authors will follow these guidelines:

a) Video captions and transcriptions - Embed captions within videos as part of the postproduction process. Provide transcripts of videos and attempt to include these transcripts on the social networking site. Maintain Section 508 compliant videos, captions and transcripts on the County's website and attempt to link back to the County website from the social networking site.

b) Photo - alternative descriptions. Name the photo after the description before uploading it to the social networking site. Write text captions and descriptions when social networking site makes these form fields available.

c) PDFs - Work to make document compliant in source format before converting to a PDF. Use formatting such as headers when applicable. Embed hyperlinks within the anchor text rather than supplying the physical URL to the right of anchor text.

4) Brand management of County logos and color or style guides. Social media users will follow these guidelines:

a) Profile Picture - County profiles should upload the County or departmental seal or logo as their picture. It is important to use the County/departmental seal or logo to demonstrate authenticity.

b) Profile Design - County profiles should use colors consistent with the County's brand, and should not use extraneous or distracting design. All design should be in keeping with Section 508 compliance (web accessibility) needs and maintain professionalism and consistency with County branding.

**Blogs:**

Blogs are forums which allow the posting of information and allow comments to such posts. Individuals who wish to use blogs to keep the public regularly informed of the activities of their departments are required to do so within the bounds of this policy. Iowa County will allow the use of County related blogs under the following standards and conditions:

1) Whenever possible, blogs should be hosted on County servers managed by the Management Information Technology Department.

2) Employees are permitted to create, or use a blog only with the approval of their Department Director.

- 3) Blogs must be reliable and dependable. Once a blog is started, it must be regularly updated and maintained.
- 4) Only County-related matters are to be addressed in blog entries.
- 5) All blogs, comments, and postings must be respectful to employees, divisions/departments, residents, and others.
- 6) Blogs and blog posts must be accurate, fair, unbiased, and reflect positively on Iowa County.
- 7) Posts should not be edited after the fact. When making changes to previous posts you must indicate that you have done so.
- 8) All blog postings may be monitored. Employees have no expectation of privacy in their use of County technology resources. The County may remove any blog entry deemed to be inappropriate, outside the scope of the author's authority, or in violation of County policy as determined by the Department Director and/or the Employee Relations Department.