

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY

I. Objective

The County acknowledges that the way residents communicate with and obtain information about the County is constantly evolving. In order to better serve the County's residents, the County and its departments may consider using social media tools to disseminate information to residents quickly.

The County has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is spoken on behalf of the County on social media sites. This policy establishes general guidelines for the use of such media, as well as guidelines for use of specific types of media, where such uses are allowed by the County.

II. Scope

This Use of County-Sanctioned Social Media Platforms Policy shall apply to all employees, whether full-time or part-time, who have been given the approval and authority to create, monitor, amend, or contribute to social media sites utilized by the County or its departments.

This Policy shall be maintained, amended and updated by the County Administrator / Controller.

III. Compliance

Users will comply with all sections of this Policy. Violations of this Policy shall be reported to the Department Head and County Administrator / Controller. Violations may result in restrictions to access of County-owned equipment, programs and information. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge or criminal prosecution as determined by the County.

IV. Guidelines for Social Media Use

A. Intent

The intent of the County in utilizing available social media is to provide information only, and not to create an opportunity for discourse between County departments and staff and members of the public. Therefore, to the extent possible, such social media shall be set up as an outgoing information source only.

B. Creation

Any department wishing to utilize a social media site for informational purposes shall notify and obtain the approval of the appropriate department head, and the County Administrator / Controller in advance. The department head of each department that establishes a social media site shall be responsible for oversight of the site, including content and upkeep, although monitoring and updating responsibilities may be delegated to an employee other than the department head.

Should the employee who administers the social media site be removed from such responsibility, or terminate their employment with the County, all passwords shall be immediately changed. A department's social media site may be maintained by an independent contractor with the approval of the County Administrator / Controller, though the department head shall remain responsible for oversight of the site.

Only employees and independent contractors who have been specifically authorized by their respective department head or the County Administrator / Controller may create, maintain, monitor or amend social media sites on behalf of the County or its departments.

The County's IT Director shall be provided information as to the location of social media sites and provided with the passwords to the sites.

The County's official website (www.stjosephcountymi.org) shall remain the County's primary and predominant internet presence. Wherever possible, content posted to social media sites should contain links directing users back to the official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the County.

C. Public Information

Users should be mindful that social media sites may be subject to public records and record retention laws and regulations. The content maintained in a social media site, including a list of subscribers and posted communications, if any, may be deemed to be public records and subject to disclosure. Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that all content is considered a public record and subject to disclosure pursuant to an appropriate request.

D. Content

Each social media site utilized by the County or a department should contain a disclaimer, if possible, that the purpose of the site is solely to provide information to residents. Social media site posts and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:

1. Profane language or content;
2. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
3. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, height, weight, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or on any other basis or classification whatsoever;

4. Solicitations of commerce that are unrelated to County business or programs;
5. Engaging in or encouragement of illegal activity;
6. Information that tends or may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
7. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
8. Confidential, copyrighted, trademarked and/or proprietary information;
9. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures.

Where possible, the County Administrator / Controller or any department head may remove any content, including comments, deemed to violate this or any other County-adopted policy, or local, state or federal law or regulation; however, a copy of such content removed based on these guidelines shall be retained, including date, time and poster when available. The copy of the removed content should be retained in its original format, whenever possible.

All information posted on social media sites should be factually accurate, and contain minimal, if any, editorial comment. Careful verification of facts should occur prior to the sharing of information, and spelling and grammar should be checked before posting. Search engines can turn up posts long after they are created, and comments can be forwarded and copied easily beyond the control of the County. Employees should always err on the side of caution, as each individual is responsible for their postings. If an employee believes that any part of a posting might violate this policy, or may be perceived to be offensive or inappropriate to any member of the public, it should be reviewed and approved by the employee's department head prior to posting. If a mistake is made in a posting, a correction should be made as soon as the mistake is discovered.

E. Acceptable Use

1. Personal v Professional

Employees should be mindful of blurring their personal and professional lives when administering social media sites. Employees should never use their County e-mail account or passwords in conjunction with a personal social networking site. County-sponsored social networking sites should never be used for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities.

2. Identification

Employees who administer public social networking sites should always identify themselves as County employees. County employees must disclose their relationship to the County whenever posting to a social media site on behalf of the County or one of its departments.

3. Terms of Service

Employees administering social networking sites should be aware of the terms of service for the particular media. If the employee believes there is a conflict between the terms of service, and this policy and/or other local or state law or regulation, the conflict should be brought to the attention of their department head and the County Administrator / Controller immediately.

F. Security

To prevent security breaches, individual user IDs and passwords should not be duplicated across multiple sites. The number of individuals who have information about and actual access to a social networking site should be kept to a minimum. An employee who becomes aware of a security breach on a social media site, including the disclosure of log-in credentials, should immediately notify their department head, the County Administrator / Controller, and the IT Director.

G. Notice

This policy shall be displayed in its entirety or as a hyperlink to anyone who visits County-sponsored Facebook pages or other County-sponsored social media sites.

V. Guidelines for Use of Existing Social Media Site

A. Creation

The intent of the County's utilizing a social media site, including Facebook, is to create a convenient information source and not a public discussion forum. Departments are authorized to create either "pages" or "groups." When establishing a new social media page, users shall indicate "government" as the "type" description, where applicable. The settings should be set up so non-authorized persons shall not be able to post on the Facebook timeline; comments are to be limited to responding to County posts.

B. Page Set-up and Use

Facebook and other social media pages shall contain, at a minimum, the County's logo and be otherwise consistent with County branding.

The department's name should be easily identified, and careful consideration shall be given to any abbreviations that are proposed to be used.

No external applications should be used unless they are authorized by the IT Director or his or her designee. Any external application may be removed if there is reason to believe that it may be a security threat, linked to a virus, and/or otherwise harmful to the County's information systems or to its external users.

Facebook pages shall include a description of the department or program, under the "About" tab immediately followed by the following:

[Name of department] is a department of the St. Joseph County, www.stjosephcountymi.org. This page has been created for the purpose of providing information about [name of department]'s programs and services for the convenience of the public. The information contained on this page are public records, including the lists of its members, followers, users, fans, and/or subscribers, and may be subject to disclosure. Any links provided to external web sites are not controlled, maintained, or regulated by the County or any organization affiliated with the County, and as such the County is NOT responsible for the content of those web sites.

Departmental pages shall contain a link to www.stjosephcountymi.org and any other relevant County webpages. Departmental pages should "Like" other County department Facebook and other social media pages and share posts where appropriate.

C. Comment Policy

Users and visitors to County-sponsored Facebook and other social media pages shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between County Departments and members of the public. The "About" tab shall include the following disclaimer:

Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Comments will not be edited for content. However, under the St. Joseph County Social Media Use Policy, the County reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments, including those that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, support or oppose political candidates or ballot proposals, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products unrelated to County business or programs, or are not topically related to the particular posting.

D. Deactivation

All precautions should be made to prevent external users from obtaining control of a user account for a social networking site operated on behalf of the City, one of its departments, and/or commissions. Therefore, in the event that the department wishes to cease maintaining a user account on a social networking site, the department must take affirmative steps to deactivate the account. In addition, the department must periodically monitor the deactivated account for no

less than six (6) months after deactivation to ensure that the account has not been "hijacked," "spoofed," or otherwise compromised by an external user

VI. Additional Policies

As technology advances and improves, it is likely that additional social media sites may be utilized and/or plans for use of social media sites will change. When such changes occur, it may be necessary to amend this Policy or adopt additional policies to govern use of such additional social media sites.