

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

The following are social media guidelines for employees and officials under the Governor's jurisdiction (collectively "employees").

- These guidelines create no new standards, legal obligations, or restrictions on employee conduct, and nothing in this document should be construed to enlarge or diminish any preexisting rights of employees or otherwise affect terms of employment with the Commonwealth.
- Nothing contained in these guidelines is intended to interfere with employee free speech rights under the First Amendment or with any other rights guaranteed under federal or state law, including activities protected by the Public Employee Relations Act (Act 195) or the Policemen and Firemen Collective Bargaining Act (Act 111).

Social Media Use on Behalf of the Commonwealth

Any use of social media on behalf of the Commonwealth must be authorized and in compliance with [Management Directive 205.42 Amended, Authorized Use of Social Media on Behalf of the Commonwealth](#).

- [Management Directive 205.42](#) defines "Social Media" as "An internet-based form of communication that includes websites, apps, or other platforms that allow users to share information and ideas with virtual communities through text, photos, videos, or other forms of communication." Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yelp, YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, Snapchat, X (formerly "Twitter"), Bluesky, Discord, Reddit, and Instagram.
- Employees are prohibited from representing that the Commonwealth has authorized them to speak on its behalf or that the Commonwealth has approved their message, unless they receive prior written authorization from the Commonwealth.
- Employees are prohibited from using their personal social media accounts for official Commonwealth purposes.

Personal Use of Social Media

Although personal use of social media does not require authorization from the Commonwealth, all social media activities, whether work-related or personal, are covered by the Commonwealth's policies including applicable provisions of [Executive Order 1980-18 Amended, Code of Conduct](#); [Management Directive 505.7 Amended, Personnel Rules](#); [Management Directive 205.34 Amended, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#); Commonwealth policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment; and any other relevant policies.

Employees are specifically reminded that the *Code of Conduct*, Part I, Sections 9 and 10 and Section 13.1 of the *Personnel Rules* provide that no employee shall "engage in scandalous or disgraceful conduct, or any other behavior, on or off duty, which may bring the service of the Commonwealth into disrepute." Further, employees who refuse or fail to comply with the *Code of Conduct* and the *Personnel Rules* shall be subjected to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

- Employees are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner as to always demonstrate the public's trust and confidence inherent in their position as a public servant, whether on or off duty.
- Employees who identify themselves as agency or Commonwealth employees when using their personal social media accounts should make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the agency or the Commonwealth. Employees should add a disclaimer to their personal social media account indicating that the account is their personal account, and that the content of the account and the views expressed therein are those of the employee and not the agency or Commonwealth.
 - **Sample Disclaimer:** This is my personal social media account. The content of this account, including the views expressed herein, are my personal views and not those of my employer.
 - Note: While the inclusion of a disclaimer may help signal to the reader that the employee's social media account is personal in nature and not an official Commonwealth social media account, employees should nevertheless be mindful of their conduct when using social media, and employees must still comply with all relevant Commonwealth and agency policies, including the *Code of Conduct* and *Personnel Rules*.
 - Reminder: If employees mix personal and work matters on a personal social media account, they may open their entire profile, including all previous posts regardless of who made them, to public comment. Doing so may create a situation where the employee's personal social media profile is open to public scrutiny and public comments may not be blocked or censored.
- Regardless of where or when employees use social media, they must be aware that their actions and behaviors may reflect negatively on themselves, their agency, and the Commonwealth, and they should always conduct themselves appropriately regardless of the medium of communication.

In addition to complying with Commonwealth policies, social media activity must also comply with all federal, state and local laws, regulations, and rules, including those governing privacy and security, copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity, and other third-party rights.

- Under no circumstances may employees post information considered by the Commonwealth to be confidential. Confidential information includes Personally Identifiable Information ("PII") and other information that is sensitive, protected, or privileged. PII includes any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. PII may contain direct identifiers that can identify a person uniquely, or quasi-identifiers that can be combined with other quasi-identifiers to successfully identify an individual. Examples of PII include name, social security number, date of birth, place of birth, mother's maiden name, biometric records, email address, passport number, or phone number; and any information that is linked or linkable to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial, or employment information. Any employee that is not sure if the information is confidential, PII, or otherwise sensitive, protected, or privileged must ask their supervisor.

Civil service-covered employees, and employees covered by the federal Hatch Act, are reminded that certain types of political activities are prohibited, and those prohibitions extend to an employee's conduct on social media. For more information regarding political activity, please review the [Guidelines for Political Activity](#).

Employees should also be aware that their agencies may have specific rules or policies in place regarding use of social media. Employees are required to follow their agency rules and policies in addition to the above. Nothing contained in this policy is intended to supplant those rules or policies.

QUESTIONS? Please contact your agency's Human Resource Office with questions.