



# Frederick County Government Administrative Policies and Procedures

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## Policy: Use of Social Media for Official Communication

### 1.0 Purpose

This document establishes the Frederick County Government policy for utilizing social media for official communication (communication on behalf of the Frederick County Government or one of its departments, agencies, Boards or Commissions). This policy serves to provide employees of Frederick County Government with the County's expectations and standards with respect to employee usage of social media for official communication. It incorporates best practices, acceptable use, and information management and control over the County use of public social media platforms. The official use of social media allows County employees to build public and agency relationships, to provide timely and important updates to the public, and to take part in conversations relevant to the County.

It is the responsibility of all employees to know these guidelines and to conduct their activities accordingly.

### 2.0 Document History

This policy will act as the County policy for utilizing social media for official communication. This document will be reviewed annually and is subject to revision.

### 3.0 Applicability and Audience

This policy applies to all Frederick County employees, agencies, departments, Boards and Commissions assigned to use official social media accounts for purposes of communicating official county, agency, department, Board or Commission information to the public.

### 4.0 Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide rules of conduct for County employees, agencies, departments and Boards and Commissions when using social media platforms to communicate in an official capacity on behalf of the Frederick County Government or its related branches. The Executive Branch expects all authorized social media coordinators to understand and to follow the requirements of this policy. If an agency chooses to utilize a social media platform, the agency will designate the platform(s) for best representation of agency and County reputation and brand. Use of any County seals or logos on social media pages must be compliant with the County's Seal and Logo Identity Standards. Agencies and divisions will be expected to oversee and verify who may "speak" and what is "said" on behalf of the agency and the County.

#### 4.1 Definitions

**Authorized User** – any person who is granted access to a social media account, assigned a role as outlined in Section 4.2

**Social Media** – forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, engage

with the public, share ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Social media includes, but is not limited to platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

#### 4.2 Social Media Account Roles

The following roles apply to Authorized User access to social media accounts. Roles should be determined and assigned by the Division Director of each agency or department that operates a social media account, and should be documented.

	Administrator	Editor	Moderator
Manage social media roles and settings	✓		
Edit the social media page	✓	✓	
Create and delete posts as the social media page	✓	✓	
Send messages as the social media page	✓	✓	✓
Response to and delete comments and posts to the social media page	✓	✓	✓
Remove and block people from the social media page	✓	✓	✓
See who published as the social media page	✓	✓	✓

#### 4.3 Social Media for Official Use Only

Social media platforms will be used only for official, informal public communications intended as informational updates related to ongoing issues, engagement with the public, or agency, department, Board or Commission specific information (e.g. inclement weather alerts and closures, public utilities status updates, and annual agency-hosted events). These public social media channels are intended only for informal communications. These forums are to be considered a moderated online discussion page and not a public forum. All communications with legal and policy effect will be handled through more formal, County-owned channels.

#### 4.4 Social Media Usage Requirements

The following are requirements for an agency’s official use of a social media platform:

- The Division Director of each agency or department that uses an official social media account shall maintain a record of the name of the account, a list of Authorized Users granted access to the social media account, the role each Authorized User is granted, as outlined in Section 4.2, and the purpose of the account (i.e. County agency engagement with the public)
- Any use of the social media account shall be for government business and related purposes
- County employees representing an agency or department of the County are responsible for the content they publish on social media

#### 4.5 Social Media Account Management

Each agency or department who uses an official social media account will manage that account and be held responsible and accountable for its use.

Any Board or Commission that uses a social media account shall inform the Office of Communications and Public Engagement of any social media account created and shall allow the Office of Communications and Public Engagement login access to the social media account. Boards and Commissions will report to the Office of Communications and Public Engagement for any issues related to the use of a social media account.

In the event a social media account is compromised (e.g. an account gets high jacked or an unauthorized user gains access), the agency responsible for the account will follow the procedures outlined in the Frederick County Government Information Security Incident Response Policy (located on the FCG Sharepoint IIT Portal) by immediately calling the IIT Helpdesk at 301-600-1013.

Each agency shall ensure the immediate revocation of access by any User no longer authorized to publish to or modify a social media platform (e.g. due to separation or relieving of social media duties).

At least yearly, each agency or department who uses an official social media account shall review the social media accounts Authorized Users.

#### 4.6 Ethical Conduct

In all social media use, the County employees, agencies and departments will maintain professional behavior and conduct themselves according to the highest possible ethical standards. All social media users will be familiar and comply with the Terms and Conditions of the platform they are using. Authorized Users should not knowingly communicate inaccurate or false information. Authorized Users will make every effort to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of confidential information.

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#### 7 Social Media Misuse

Any agency or employee identified as misusing an official social media platform will lose access to the account. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of misuse:

- Unauthorized private messaging unrelated to County business
- Use of vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks, or use of demeaning or offensive language
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information
- Any posting that is harassing, discriminatory, or contains disparaging or degrading information about any individual or group due to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law

#### 4.8 Content Moderating

Authorized Users of official social media accounts should strive to moderate comments, replies and posts. Comments, replies and posts may be removed from a social media account if they contain, constitute, or link to:

- Comments unrelated to the purpose and topical scope of the post
- Obscenities
- Personal identifying information or sensitive personal information
- Incitement to imminent lawless action
- Speech presenting a grave and imminent threat
- Fighting words
- True threats
- Fraud
- Defamation (libel/slander)
- Solicitation to commit, or speech integral to, criminal conduct
- Information that could reasonably compromise public safety
- Promotion or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction
- Promotion or endorsement in favor of, or in opposition to, a political campaign or candidate
- Apparent spam
- Content posted by automatic software programs (i.e. "bots")
- Copyrighted material
- Misinformation or disinformation

#### 4.9 Removal of a Comment

Authorized Users of a social media account should remove a comment, reply or post if it falls within one of the foregoing categories in 4.8. If a comment, reply or post is removed, the Authorized User must notify the user that the comment, reply or post was removed and the reason for the removal.

Any comment, reply or post removed pursuant to this Policy will be retained for a period of three years after the removal date.

Should an Authorized User have a question about whether a comment, post or reply should be removed, that person should reach out to the Office of Communications and Public Engagement for guidance. The Office of Communications and Public Engagement may seek the guidance of the Office of the County Attorney for questions regarding removal of comments or posts.

#### 4.10 Blocking of users

Authorized Users of a social media account may choose to block any user who has been properly notified of violating the posting terms on more than 3 occasions. In order to block any user, an Authorized User must contact the Office of the County Attorney and receive approval from the Office of the County Attorney.

Users who are blocked may be unblocked after a period of three months from the date on which the user was prohibited from commenting, replying or blocked.

#### 4.11 Security of Accounts and Social Media Platforms

To ensure the safety of accounts and social media platforms, Authorized Users should follow these recommended steps, when possible:

- Use a strong password. A strong password contains at least 8 characters, not easily guessed or a dictionary word, and contains non-alphanumeric characters. Passwords should be changed quarterly.
- Use individual accounts. Do not share accounts where possible.
- Use County issued or sponsored accounts where possible versus personal accounts.
- Use Multifactor or Two Factor Authentication. This requires another factor, such as a text message or authenticator application apart from the account username and password.
- Use a different password from those used at Frederick County or other government systems.

This policy shall become effective upon the date of issuance.



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Rick Arcum, Chief Administrative Officer

Date of issuance: September 14, 2022

