



County of Harnett

Social Media Use Policy

as of October 19, 2020

Purpose

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, Harnett County departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The use of social media by the County and County departments for business purposes can facilitate information sharing and serve outreach and communication goals. The County encourages departments to use social media to communicate their mission and messages with the public. The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for the use of social media by departments of the County of Harnett and employees of the County. This policy applies to all County departments and employees. Individual departments shall not have separate policies with additional requirements or restrictions on social media use unless such a policy has received legal review and has been approved by the County Manager.

Definition

The U.S. Government defines social media as the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Through social media, county departments can create, organize, edit, combine, and share content. Social media encompasses many forms, including social-networking, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, and podcasts. Some examples of these social media forms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Policy

Creation of Media

Employees may only establish official sites, blogs, pages, or accounts in their official capacity as County staff on social media with the authorization of their Department Director and the Public Information Officer. The Public Information Officer must also

review and approve any new official social media pages before they are made accessible to the general public.

Use by Employees

1. Employees who wish to establish and/or maintain an official social media site, blog, page, or other account in their official capacity as County staff must complete the Social Media Authorization Form. A copy of the form must be submitted to the employee's department director and the County's Public Information Officer for approval prior to activating a social media site or publishing content. If an authorization request is approved, the Public Information Officer will create the name of the account, social media handle, and a password for the account. For any existing accounts, the Public Information Officer will provide a social media handle and password for the account.
2. The Public Information Officer, the department director, and authorized employees within the department will have access to the login and password information for the account. Any email used should be an official County email address, and passwords should be secure. The Public Information Officer or IT Director shall have the authority to change passwords. If a password is changed, the Public Information Officer will notify the authorized users.
3. An employee should not speak on behalf of the County or their department unless authorized to do so. Authorized employees are expected to speak respectfully and professionally about the County and County-related matters and to identify themselves and their role with the County when speaking in any such capacity.
4. Employees are expected to follow copyright, fair use, acceptable use, and financial disclosure laws when using online communications, as well as the appropriate Records Retention Schedules for any information posted on social media. The unlawful use of copyrighted materials, unfounded or derogatory statements, misrepresentation, or the disclosure of confidential information is strictly prohibited.
5. Department directors, or designees, and the Public Information Officer are responsible for determining who is authorized to use social media on behalf of the department, and for designating appropriate access levels. Department directors, or designees, will be responsible to the County Manager and/or HR in the event of a problem. If an employee's authorization has been revoked, the department director should notify the Public Information Officer immediately.

6. As designated social media representatives, employees may not publish content to any official website or social media application that is unrelated to subjects associated with the County or that is not relevant to citizens.
7. Employees authorized to post on social media should be aware of their association with the County and that at all times they serve as a representative of the County. When posting, employees must be transparent and honest, speak within their area of expertise, use credible sources, and link back to primary County websites whenever possible. Employees should never repeat rumors, post about internal personnel, or post confidential information.
8. Authorized employees should not cite or reference County contractors or suppliers without their approval. Once approval is granted, be sure to include a link back to the source. Photographs of citizens and employees should not be used if the citizen or employee requests that it not be used.
9. Official County accounts should not comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" private citizen or commercial profiles from within their County social networking page. However, official County accounts are permitted to comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" content on private citizen or commercial profiles that is directly related to community service or outreach in the County.
10. Official County accounts should not comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" any political groups' or figures' profiles nor make any political comments/postings on the County social media site.
11. Employees must refrain from participating in arguments with social profile visitors. Responses should be respectful and informative rather than based in opinion. Comments/postings that warrant a response should be referred to the appropriate County employee or department, who may then address the commenter's issue off of social media. Each department is responsible for monitoring postings, and taking appropriate action when necessary, to protect general site visitors from inappropriate or technically harmful information. Comments/postings must be monitored daily, and the following must be either linked to or displayed on the page:

Harnett County social media sites are subject to the applicable public records laws. Consequently, any communication on Harnett County social media sites (whether by a County employee or the general public) is subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties. Relevant Harnett County and North Carolina public records retention schedules apply to social networking content. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the

integrity of the original record and is easily accessible using the approved County platforms and tools.

The County reserves the right to remove any comments/postings that (i) contain unprotected speech such as obscenity, defamation, fraud, incitement, and speech integral to criminal conduct, ; (ii) are spam or contain computer viruses; (iii) advocate or depict illegal activity; (iv) target or disparage any ethnic, racial, religious, gender or other type of group; (v) compromise the safety or security of the public; (vi) promote private business ventures, services, or products; (vii) are related to campaigns for public office or promote a political organization; (viii) infringe on copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property; (ix) are not related to the County or County-related matters; (x) violent or threatening; or (xi) disclosure of confidential, sensitive or proprietary information.

Please note that the comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinions and positions of the County of Harnett or its officers and employees. If you have any questions concerning the operation of this online moderated discussions site, please contact the County department.

Authorized employees must refrain from blocking, hiding, or removing from County social media sites any constitutionally protected speech, unless it is in violation of one of the above listed exclusions. If an authorized employee receives a questionable comment and is not sure how to proceed, they should notify the Public Information Officer immediately.

12. Public comments/postings that are blocked, hidden, or removed from County social media sites shall be retained pursuant to the records retention schedule along with the reason the specific content is deemed not suitable for posting.
 - a. Authorized County social media users are responsible for documenting blocked, hidden, or removed public comments/postings from County social media sites.
 - b. Authorized users must take a screenshot of the comment/posting and place it in an email addressed to the department director, or designee, along with the reason the specific content violated one of the exclusions listed in Section 11 above.
 - c. The department director, or designee, must then forward any such emails to the Public Information Officer for public records retention.
13. Authorized County social media users will follow these guidelines regarding brand management of County logos and color or style 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. The image should look professional and be of good quality.
- b. **Profile Design.** County profiles should use colors consistent with the County's brand, and should not use extraneous or distracting design. All designs should be in keeping with web accessibility compliance needs and maintain professionalism and consistency with official County branding. The name "Harnett County," "County of Harnett," or the official County or department logo must be displayed.
- c. **Profile Contact Information.** Contact information should display an official County email address, include something about being the "official account", provide a link to the County or department website, and include a physical/mailling address as well as phone number.

Personal Use of Social Media Guidelines

The County of Harnett respects the rights 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. However, the County recognizes that these types of tools can sometimes blur the line between professional and personal lives. Therefore, employees are reminded that, as representatives of the County or their department, the rules and guidelines which are stated in this policy must be taken into consideration when participating in these services at any time, but particularly when identifying themselves as employees of the County or when context might lead to that conclusion. Above all, employees should understand that information put out through social media should be considered public and reflects both upon you as an individual and upon the County in your role as an employee.

- 1. 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. Personal use related to a matter of public concern must be conducted in such a manner that a reader would not think the employee is speaking on behalf of the County.
- 2. Employees are personally responsible for their commentary on all social media and can be held personally liable for commentary that is considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous by any party.
- 3. Personal use of social media may not violate or infringe upon the right of any other person or entity or constitute a criminal offense or create a civil liability.

4. Employees are encouraged to exercise sound judgment and discretion in contributing to social media, where information posted may be seen by other users. Be reminded that the internet never forgets. This means everything you publish will be visible to the world for a long time regardless of any attempts to erase or edit comments/posts.
5. When in doubt, stop. Add a disclaimer to your social networking profile, personal blog, or other online presences that clearly states that the opinions or views expressed are yours alone and do not represent the views of Harnett County or your department.
 - a. Example: "The views expressed on this page are my own and do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Harnett County or the departments within."
6. In a publicly accessible forum, do not discuss any County or department-related information that is not already considered public information. The discussion of sensitive, proprietary, or classified information is strictly prohibited. If you have signed a confidentiality agreement, you are expected to follow it. Please act responsibly with the information with which you are entrusted.
7. Employees may not post the name, trademark, or logo of the County, company-privileged information, including copyrighted information or company-issued documents, or photographs of other employees, residents, vendors, or suppliers taken in their capacity as County employees.
8. The County permits very limited personal social networking during the workday. Social networking during the workday is viewed as similar in nature to receiving a personal phone call, and thus should be of a reasonably limited duration. Social networking shall not interfere in any way with job responsibilities. Supervisors have the right and ability to further restrict social networking at work, as appropriate, and nothing in this policy limits or restricts the County's rights and/or ability to monitor or modify use of County electronic communication equipment. Furthermore, 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, Human Resources and/or the County Manager's office.

Reporting Violations

The County requests and strongly urges employees to report any violations or possible or perceived violations of this policy to the Public Information Officer along with Department Directors, Human Resources, or the County Manager's office.

Discipline for Violations

The County will investigate and respond to all reports of violations or perceived violations of this policy. Violation of the policies herein may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

County of Harnett Social Media Use Policy

UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF POLICY

I, _____, have received/had an opportunity to review a copy of the County of Harnett Social Media Use Policy. I have read the policy in its entirety and have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about it. Furthermore, I fully understand and agree to comply with this policy. I also accept that it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my supervisor or Human Resources staff if at any time I am unclear about the policy's requirements. I fully understand that failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee's Printed Name

Employee's Signature

Date