

EMPLOYEE SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY

I. Purpose

Kitsap County uses social media platforms to share timely and accurate information about County programs, services, and events. These platforms serve as communication tools to promote transparency, collaboration, and public engagement in support of the County’s mission. Social media platforms are optional tools that supplement, but do not replace, existing County communication channels such as the County website, newsletters, and press releases. Kitsap County has adopted a Social Media Policy which sets forth specific roles and responsibilities for the official use and management of the County’s social media accounts and sets expectations for employee conduct related to the official use and management of those accounts.

This employee policy is amended to ensure employee conduct related to the use of social media is consistent with the Social Media Policy.

II. Definitions

- A. Authorized County Social Media Account (“County Social Media Account”): A social media account established by a department, office, or elected official acting on behalf of Kitsap County on a Social Media Platform and approved by the County Communications Manager. For purposes of this policy, references to “County Social Media Accounts” include any associated pages, profiles, posts, comments, or messages unless otherwise specified.
- B. Confidential Information: Information the County is legally prohibited or privileged from disclosing under federal, state, or local law, including, but is limited to, personal information; (PHI) protected health information; attorney-client communications; exempt personnel or investigative records; unreleased procurement or financial information security-sensitive information; and any data designated confidential by statute, regulation, court order, contract, or County policy. Confidential Information may not be posted, shared, or referenced on any County Social Medial Account.
- C. Content: Text, images, audio, video, links, comments, or messages posted, shared, or received through a social media account, site, or application.
- D. County Communications Manager: The County official or designee responsible for oversight of County communication tools including social media accounts.
- E. Information Services (IS) Department Director (“Information Services Director”): The County official or designee responsible for information management, governance, system maintenance, and security.
- F. Proprietary Information: Information owned or controlled by Kitsap County or a third party that has operational, economic, or strategic value and is protected from disclosure by law or contract, including trade secrets; vendor-protected materials; software or system-configuration details; internal operational protocols; draft work product not approved for release; and documents subject to licensing or copyright restrictions. Proprietary Information must not be disclosed on County Social Media Accounts.

- G. **Social Media Account:** An account, or other method of private access, which allows the account owner to post content to a social media platform.
- H. **Social Media Post:** Any content shared on social media through a social media account, page, or user's profile.
- I. **Social Media Platform:** A third-party service that hosts online content and interaction (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter). These platforms are typically third-party hosted online technologies that include social networks, media sharing networks, discussion forums, and blogging and publishing networks.

III. Employee Conduct and Use

Employees are expected to use social media responsibly and in a manner that upholds public trust in Kitsap County. Certain employees may have more specific responsibilities, as designated by their roles specified in the County Social Media Policy.

All employees are subject to the following requirements:

- A. **Public Records and Retention.** All content on authorized County Social Media Accounts including posts, comments, and messages constitutes a public record under 42.56 RCW.
 - 1. Employees are responsible for identifying and immediately forwarding public record requests received through an authorized County Social Media Account to the County Public Records Officer.
 - 2. Employees are prohibited from using personal accounts, devices, or storage systems to create, retain, or manage public records related to County social media activity, in accordance with Appendix F of the Personnel Manual and applicable records management standards.
- B. **Employee Responsibilities.**
 - 1. Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination depending on the nature of the violation. Employees' use of social media must comply with all other County policies. Any employee who observes or has knowledge of prohibited use of County Social Media Accounts should report it to a supervisor, the Human Resources Department, or another appropriate supervisor/manager. Employees reporting such actions will be protected from retaliation.¹
 - 2. County employees and officials should not use County Social Media Account private messaging/chat functions to have ongoing communication with the public. If a member of the public sends a message to the County via a chat function the County should respond by directing the party to the County website, information phone line, or appropriate department contact.

¹ See Chapter 3.05 Kitsap County Code and Kitsap County Personnel Manual, Appendix P.

3. Unless expressly authorized to use County Social Media Accounts, employees acting in their official capacity, are prohibited from publishing or commenting on County Social Media Accounts. Employees may use personal social media accounts to comment on County social media accounts but may not represent that they are speaking for or on behalf of the County, may not identify themselves as County employees, and must not imply County endorsement of any personal statement, opinion, or activity.
4. All employee uses of social media will follow the standards applicable to County officers and employees as referenced in Chapter 9, Subsection D of the Kitsap County Personnel Manual.²
5. Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media platforms, but an employee's exercise of expression is balanced against the County's interest in the effective and efficient fulfillment of its responsibilities to the public. Thus, employees must not engage in off-duty conduct which harms the County's reputation, mission, or functions, renders the employee unable to perform their duties, results in other employees being unwilling or unable to work with the employee, or undermines the County's ability to direct the workforce.
6. Use of social media presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. Kitsap County employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Employees must not post workplace photographs, images of coworkers, internal workspaces, or County property without authorization and without ensuring no confidential or sensitive information is visible. Posting of statements, comments, and pictures of the work place, co-workers, and/or customers, with or without their permission, that could be viewed as offensive or potentially offensive; that disparages customers, members, associates, or suppliers; or that might constitute harassment or bullying to anyone viewing the content regardless of the intent of the original post, could be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
7. Personal use of social media must not interfere with work performance or County operations or compliance with the Kitsap County Use of Technology Policy.
8. Employees must not disclose confidential or proprietary information or use County Social Media Accounts for personal gain, political activity, non-County business, or in any manner or any purpose that violates law or County policy.
9. Employees are prohibited from misusing County social media account access privileges in any way. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Using social media accounts for unlawful activities, including violations of copyright law, or for activities that are malicious or have the effect of harassing other users;
10. Sharing County social media account login credentials and passwords with non-authorized individuals.

² See, e.g., chapters 42.20 and 42.23 RCW; RCW 42.17A.555 through .575; and Kitsap County Personnel Manual.