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| <b>Policy Type</b>       | General Administrative Practices |
| <b>Policy Name</b>       | AR 48, Social Media Policy       |
| <b>Resolution Number</b> | 2022-0816                        |
| <b>Effective Date</b>    | September 13, 2022               |

## PURPOSE

This policy establishes protocols and procedures to guide departments/agencies in developing appropriate standards for online social media activity, utilizing authorized networks; provide direction on determining appropriate content and addressing inappropriate public commentary in social media settings; and to protect confidential and/or proprietary information, the County brand, and citizen information. This policy also incorporates countywide social media use protocols and procedures intended to mitigate associated risks from use of this technology.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all Tulare County employees involved in the management and/or use of social media on behalf of the County, except where specifically stated otherwise within this document.

## DEFINITIONS

- a. **Content** –Refers to all text, images or other media, and material submitted, posted, or published to an online source that is accessible by the public. This includes but may not be limited to still photographs, writings, documents, spoken statements, music, audio, video, video recordings, slides, portraits, caricatures, and graphics.
- b. **Hyperlink** – A hyperlink (or link) is a reference to a webpage, website, document, or content that the reader can directly follow or that is followed automatically. The reference points to content in its entirety or to a specific element within the content.
- c. **Mass Email Blast** – Refers to the use of an email-based delivery system to disseminate information to the public electronically in mass distribution, such as a newsletter subscriber group.
- d. **Social Media Platform/Network/Site** – Refers to any medium whereby content (including, but not limited to images, videos, messages, and sound files) is broadcast to, or capable of being broadcast to, the general public or a significant section of the general public. For the sake of clarity, and by way of example, Social Media Platforms include (but are not limited to) YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and any “blog” or other type of web journal.

## POLICY

### 1. POLICY ADMINISTRATOR

The County Public Information Officer shall be responsible for the administration and biennial review of this policy.



## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY STAFF

The same standards, principles, and guidelines that apply to Tulare County employees in the performance of their assigned duties apply to employees' online activities. The County has an expectation that all employees will exercise professional responsibility whenever they participate in social media as a representative of the County and recognizes that the proper use of social media is another important tool available to improve communications with the public.

- a. Social media involvement is intended to add value to a County agency/department. Value can be measured in many ways: furthering the accomplishment of the agency/departmental mission, helping to improve the public knowledge of County services, building a sense of community, and/or solving a problem.
- b. The County's websites are its primary internet presence, and when used appropriately, social media may be useful in furthering the goals of the County and the missions of its departments in informing and interacting with the public by pointing back to content offered on websites, such as in-depth information, forms and related documents, payment portals, and other services.
- c. Proper representation: Staff should appropriately identify themselves as a County representative when posting information to a social media site. County personnel rules of conduct apply.
- d. Professional presentation: Staff should be conscientious and thoughtful about how the County is presented online. As a representative of a County agency/department, staff and the County will be judged by the language used on social media.
- e. Proper use of grammar and style are crucial. Minimize the use of jargon and acronyms that would not be widely understood by every group of individuals.
- f. Be vigilant about not disclosing confidential or proprietary information. Do not identify a partner or supplier by name or provide information that might be proprietary in nature without the supplier's or partner's knowledge and/or permission.
- g. Show respect for others. Respect the privacy of others and carefully consider the discussion of any topics that might be objectionable or inflammatory.
- h. Ensure that posts are factually correct. If the accuracy of information is uncertain, take all steps possible to check the facts and check with agency/department leadership before the information is published.
- i. Acknowledge mistakes. Timely correction of errors or inaccurate information is essential.
- j. Exercise discipline. County social media activities must not interfere with an employee's other job duties or commitments to the public and co-workers.



### 3. APPROVED PLATFORMS

Agency/department social media technology use is limited to approved social media networks and associated site usage standards.

a. Approved Networks:

A list of approved social media networks will be maintained by each department. The list will be updated to reflect new or removed networks and changes based on periodic reviews and as needed.

b. Review and Approval Process

Tulare County TCiCT will maintain a procedure for reviewing and approving the use of new sites on the TCPolicies intranet page.

i. New requests shall be sent to the Agency/Department Head or designee.

ii. Review triggers: changes to the use case, site functionality, terms of service, or relevant County policy.

### 4. USAGE STANDARDS

a. Usage standards for approved social networks will be maintained by TCiCT on the TCPolicies Intranet page in the form of "social media platform playbooks." Options that have not been defined are at the discretion of the agency/department.

b. Since social network capabilities may change without notice at any time, standard items listed within this document may become outdated, and agency Public Information Officers, in conjunction with departmental leadership, must evaluate continued use to uphold the intent and requirements of this policy.

c. Report new or obsolete usage standards, business cases, and platform terms of service to the agency/department head or designee.

d. Agencies/departments are advised to periodically audit assigned accounts to limit access to those with business necessity.

### 5. APPROPRIATENESS OF CONTENT & PUBLIC COMMENTS

This section provides agencies/departments with general direction on what Tulare County considers appropriate and inappropriate content for public sharing online and identifies the types of public comments that may be considered inappropriate and subject to deletion from County online discussion sites.

a. **Appropriateness of Content**

Tulare County provides a significant amount of information to the public by electronic means. As a government agency, the County consistently strives to present itself professionally and in a manner that is suitable to its diverse audience. This policy provides general direction on what the County considers appropriate and inappropriate content for public sharing online.



- i. **Applicable Formats**  
This policy applies to all electronic content hosted online or disseminated electronically, for public view, by any Tulare County workforce member. Applicable electronic formats may include, but are not limited to, text, comments, video, audio, graphics, images, documents, hyperlinks, websites, portals, social media sites, mass email blasts, etc.
- ii. **Responsibility**  
County agencies/departments that provide information to the public via electronic format are responsible for ensuring electronic content conforms and is managed in compliance with this policy. Agencies/departments may develop additional department procedures, within policy compliance, as deemed business appropriate.
- iii. **Unauthorized content includes information that:**
  - A. Threatens, condescends, or degrades any group belonging to a particular race, color, religion, national origin, sex, creed, political affiliation, ancestry, marital status, age, or disability
  - B. Is profane, vulgar, obscene, or sexually explicit
  - C. Promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation
  - D. Can be classified as confidential, private, or proprietary, or can be classified as personal health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  - E. May infringe on a third party's copyright or intellectual property rights
  - F. Contains a solicitation of commerce
  - G. Contains a solicitation for non-county affiliated private events.
  - H. Contains unauthorized paid advertisements or endorsements.
  - I. Contains plagiarized material
  - J. May be illegal or encourages illegal activity
  - K. May compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- iv. Do not knowingly violate an authorized provider's terms of service for allowed usage.
- v. Correct content mistakenly published with errors or misrepresentations in a timely manner.

**b. Social Media Public Comment Policy**

The Tulare County Social Media Public Comment Policy, incorporated herein as Appendix A, is intended to be posted on every county online site that permits public comment. The policy includes terms for participating in County online discussions and identifies the types of public comment that may be considered inappropriate and subject to deletion from County online discussion sites.



## Appendix A

### Social Media Public Comment Policy

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to make the public aware of the County's terms for participating in County online discussions and to identify the types of public comments that may be considered inappropriate and subject to deletion from County online discussion sites.

#### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Tulare County online sites that permit public comment, including but not be limited to websites, portals, blogs, and social networking sites.

#### **POLICY ADMINISTRATOR**

Agencies/departments that establish/administer online discussions are responsible for ensuring policy compliance.

#### **POLICY**

1. County agency/department online sites that permit public comment (websites, portals, blogs, county-established social network sites, etc.) shall prominently display this policy on each online page that displays discussion content.
2. Whenever possible, online discussions should be moderated by designated staff. All unmoderated discussions should be monitored regularly for compliance with this policy.
3. Posted comments that do not comply with this policy shall be rejected when received via moderated online discussions and promptly removed from public view when received via unmoderated discussions. This includes but is not limited to statements, links, video, images, documents, etc.
4. The County's Official Online Comment Policy is as follows:

#### **ONLINE COMMENT POLICY**

The County of Tulare welcomes you and your comments.

The purpose of this discussion is to present information relevant to the stated purpose of this site regarding matters of public interest in the County of Tulare, including its many residents, businesses, and visitors. We encourage you to submit your comments, but please note that this is a moderated online discussion site for specific topics, intended to be a limited public forum.

Please note that the comments expressed on this site do not necessarily reflect the opinions or positions of the County of Tulare, its officers, agents, affiliates, or employees.

By posting anything to this site, you, as a user, agree to the following terms:

- a. You will treat others with respect.
- b. You warrant that you own or have permission to post the information contained in your postings, including but not limited to video, photos, or digital reproductions, and that no copyright or trademark infringement has taken place due to posting it on this site. Further, the County of Tulare does not guarantee or warrant that any



information posted by users on this site is correct and disclaims any liability whatsoever for any loss or damage resulting from reliance on any such information.

- c. You do not retain any rights over your postings. Postings are intended for public view, and any personal information posted constitutes a waiver of any rights to privacy or confidentiality.
- d. Once a submission is posted, the County of Tulare reserves the right to delete submissions that violate the Terms of Use Guidelines. Violators may be blocked.
- e. Any content posted may be subject to public disclosure upon request. Activity on County sites is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.

Submissions posted to this page will be monitored, and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible and without prior notice. The County of Tulare reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, including, but not limited to:

- a. Profane or obscene language and/or content
- b. Defamatory statements
- c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, or any protected class.
- d. Sexual content or links to sexual content
- e. Content that includes unlawful harassment or threats of violence
- f. Comments that are not topically related or out of context
- g. Solicitations of commerce
- h. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- i. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- j. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party
- k. Content that infringes on copyright or trademark.
- l. Content that defames any person, group, or organization
- m. False content or any malicious statements concerning any employee, the County, or its operations
- n. Disclosure of any proprietary, confidential, or privileged information
- o. Repeated postings of inappropriate or inflammatory material
- p. Statements in support of or opposition to political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures.
- q. Content that is spam or links to other sites.