

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY EMPLOYEES

I. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, appointed officials, and elected officials. The term “employee” is used comprehensively throughout the policy to include employees, volunteers, appointed officials, and elected officials.

II. PURPOSE

To establish a policy governing the appropriate use of Douglas County and personal social media accounts and provide guidelines to assist in making responsible decisions regarding the appropriate use of social media.

III. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Personal Liability

Employees are ultimately responsible for content they post online, whether posted at work, at home, on personal time, or while using County-owned or personal devices. Before creating online content, employees should consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Under both federal and state laws, employees may be held personally liable for any statements deemed defamatory, obscene, discriminatory, threatening, intimidating, harassing, proprietary, or libelous by any offended party (regardless if the statement is about the County, fellow employees, residents, suppliers or other parties). The County disclaims all liability for such statements made by any employee as being entirely outside the scope of each employee’s employment.

B. Employee’s use of social media is subject to and guided by Douglas County Code 2.02.090, NRS Chapter 281A, Ethics in Government, Policy 100.12 Sexual Harassment, Policy 100.32 Social Media Policy, and Policy 400.01 Acceptable Use Policy.

C. Use of Douglas County Social Media:

1. The purpose of the County’s social media accounts is to provide its citizens with up-to-date information regarding County departments, programs, events, and news. The purpose is not for conducting official County business, and it is not meant to serve as an avenue for responding to public records requests. If an individual requests a public record on the County’s social media account, then the request must be responded to through written or electronic mail, not through social media. The County has a heightened and legitimate interest in the content of social media posts made by an employee in his/her official capacity. Employees must ensure that their official communications are accurate, properly vetted, approved by management, demonstrate sound judgment, and promote the County’s

mission and values. Any employees with questions regarding communications made in their official capacity should contact their department director, manager or supervisor, or Public Information Officer (PIO) for further information.

2. Only employees authorized per the County's Social Media Policy 100.32 shall have access to County social media platform accounts to post content.
3. It is appropriate and desirable for County employees to engage in professional networking and training opportunities through social media. When employees participate in an online social network, blog, group page, wiki, or any other form of social media as a representative or employee of Douglas County, the following expectations of conduct apply:
 - i. County employees shall always show respect. Prohibited behavior includes harassment, discrimination, threats, intimidation, slurs, personal insults, obscenities, or any conduct that would not be acceptable in the County's workplace or violate federal, state, or local laws, Douglas County code, and/or policies. Consideration should be made related to topics, which may be considered objectionable to common civility or inflammatory in nature.
 - ii. Employees should avoid engaging in arguments and provide factual information.
 - iii. All content and posts should be designed to add value and promote Douglas County programs and initiatives. Employees should strive to provide relevant, accurate, and timely information and perspective.
 - iv. The County promotes transparency and honesty in communications, and therefore employees are prohibited from posting anonymously or using pseudonyms or misleading screen names when representing the County in an official capacity.
 - v. Employees sharing emergency information, in his/her official capacity, shall be posted directly from Douglas County owned pages with an official Douglas County logo and not from personal social media platforms.

D. Use of Private Social Media:

1. Consistent with policy 400.01, Acceptable Use, the County reserves the right to monitor the employees' personal use of the County's internet connections and computer usage on County owned equipment at any time. Employees should not consider their usage to be private when connected to the County's internet or network. The County has the right to inspect any and all files stored anywhere on the County's network or any County-owned devices to assure compliance with this policy.
2. Employees are prohibited from posting any non-public information or financial, confidential, private, or proprietary information about the County, its employees, or its citizens, which the employee learned or acquired in the course of the performance of the employees' duties on any personal or non-

County social media accounts or platforms. However, this policy does not prohibit an employee from disclosing or discussing his/her own personal and confidential information with others should the employee choose to share his/her information.

3. Employees are prohibited from using their personal social media for conducting official County business. However, employees may share Douglas County approved posts or links directing people back to one of Douglas County's official websites for official information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the Douglas County. Employees may not represent themselves as a spokesperson for the County using their personal social media accounts.
4. If employees publish content from their personal accounts or on social media platforms which involve work or subjects associated with the County, a disclaimer should be used, such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Douglas County's views, positions, strategies or opinions."
5. Display of County or department logos, uniforms, and/or similar identifying items on personal social media is prohibited unless authorized by a supervisor.
6. Employees should not work on private, personal social media sites or platforms during scheduled work time, excluding breaks.
7. Employees should be aware of the effect online postings on personal social media may have on their reputations, as well as on the County and his/her specific Department's image. Consequently, employees are advised the County may observe content and information made available by employees through social media.
8. County employee's public image in social media, which can be associated with the County, should meet the standards of the workplace rules of conduct. Offensiveness, disparaging comments, untruthful statements, demeaning behavior, nude or obscene pictures and/or videos, and illegal substance use are all examples of behavior that is considered inappropriate by the County. Employees can be disciplined for non-work related social media conduct if 1) it violates Douglas County code, policy or labor agreements, or becomes public knowledge and 2) the governmental interest asserted to justify its disciplinary action is greater than the employee's First Amendment rights or other interests¹.
9. This policy is not intended to preclude or dissuade employees from engaging in activities protected by state or federal law, including but not limited to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, and NRS Chapter 288, such as discussing wages, benefits, or terms and conditions of employment, forming, joining or supporting labor unions, bargaining collectively through representatives of their choosing, raising complaints about working conditions for their and their fellow employees' mutual aid or protection or legally required activities. This policy is also not intended to prevent or interfere with employees' ability to disclose, to the extent not expressly prohibited by law, improper governmental action as defined by NRS Chapter 281.

¹ (See generally: *Dible v. City of Chandler*, 515 F.3d 918 (9th Cir. 2008).)

IV. REPORTING VIOLATIONS

The County requests and strongly urges employees to report any actual or perceived violations of this policy to his/her immediate supervisor, manager, Human Resources, or County Manager's office.

V. DEFINITION

Social media: Any website or electronic medium that allows for communication, accessible to anyone via the internet. Examples of social media include, but is not limited to: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Next Door, Flickr, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Digg, Reddit, Delicious, StumbleUpon, and Snapchat. This policy covers all types of social media and networking sites, including those that may exist today and those, which may come into existence in the future.

VI. RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW: The Internal Review Committee shall review this policy as needed or at least once every 3 years.