



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Applicability

This policy applies to all employees, including but not limited to interns, fellows and volunteers, who work for the City of Providence.

Purpose

When used appropriately, social media is useful in furthering the goals of the City and the missions of its departments. This policy provides standards and procedures for the use of official City of Providence social media sites. In addition, this policy provides important guidelines for employees who use social media such as Facebook and Twitter for their own personal purposes while off duty and utilizing their own devices. Violations of this policy will subject the employee to progressive discipline up to and including termination.

Policy

Personal Social Media: While social media presents new ways to connect with friends, colleagues and the world, it also presents certain risks. To assist City employees in making responsible decisions about the use of social media, we have established these important guidelines.

- Privacy does not exist in the world of social media and careful consideration should be taken when referencing the City of Providence, individual departments, coworkers or business topics. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the author and the City. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created and comments can be forwarded or copied.
- Employees must never represent themselves as a spokesperson for the City of Providence or any of its departments, unless it is part of their official duties, on an official City of Providence site. If an employee creates online posts related to the City, its operations or its staff, or his or her employment, s/he must make it clear that s/he is not speaking on behalf of the City. It is best to include a disclaimer such as “The opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the City of Providence, its elected officials or its employees.”
- Any confidential or privileged information acquired by an employee as a result of his/her employment with the City cannot be disclosed via social media. This includes, but is not limited to, internal reports, policies, procedures, other internal business-related confidential communications, and any personal confidential information.
- Employees should not access personal social media during working hours. See also the Information Technology policy for more details.
- An employee’s City email address must never be used to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools unless it is part of their official duties, on an official City of Providence site.
- Postings that include discriminatory remarks, harassment and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated.

City Social Media Policy: While the City's website (www.providenceri.com) is the City's primary internet presence, the City recognizes that social media may reach a broader audience. The following establishes City-wide social media use policies, protocols and procedures intended to mitigate associated risks. Departments using social media technology prior to the implementation of the City's Social Media Use Policy shall achieve full policy compliance within 90 days of the effective date of this document.

- All City of Providence social media sites posted by individual departments must first be authorized by the Department Director and will then be subject to written approval by the Mayor's Director of Communications or designee.
- To establish a social media account, the department must designate the City's Chief Information Officer or designee as account administrator. The CIO will have the authority to remove any prohibited content from any City social media site at any time.
- Account password information shall only be shared with authorized staff that has been designated by the department director.
- Any employee responsible for maintaining a social media page must sign a contract agreement acknowledging this policy and their responsibility.
- City social media sites shall comply with the Providence Code of Ethics, the Rhode Island Code of Ethics in Government, and federal and state laws and regulations including, but not limited to, copyright laws, records retention laws, the Access to Public Records Act, the First Amendment, privacy laws, and employment related laws.
- City social media sites are not to be used by the general public for making any official communications to the City, for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, or giving notice required by any statute, ordinance or regulation.
- City social media sites shall remain the property of the City.
- Each department is responsible for the postings on their social media page, and taking appropriate action when necessary, to protect general site visitors from inappropriate or technically harmful information and links. Inappropriate posts include but are not limited to the following types of postings regardless of format (text, video, images, links, documents, etc.):
 1. Comments not topically related;
 2. Profane language or content;
 3. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regards to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 4. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 5. Solicitations of commerce;
 6. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 7. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 8. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- All City social media pages will be monitored to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, message, and branding consistent with the goals of the City.