



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Enterprise Policy

HR-SOCIAL MEDIA-2020

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Kyle A. Adamonis
401-222-2160

Personal Social Media Use Policy

September 10, 2020

1. Purpose

This policy is designed to:

- a. Notify employees of their personal responsibility to ensure that their social media activities comply with the Rhode Island Code of Ethics, 520-RICR-00-00-1, the Employee Conduct/Ethics policy in the State's Employee Handbook, the Governor's Executive Order 15-01, Ethics and Integrity in Government, all applicable policies, laws and regulations, and the directives of their agency.
- b. Provide guidelines for State personnel to help navigate appropriate personal social media use.

2. Applicability

This policy applies to all state personnel in their personal use of social media, and is in accordance with the Rhode Island Code of Ethics, 520-RICR-00-00-1, the Employee Conduct/Ethics policy in the State's Employee Handbook, the Governor's Executive Order 15-01, Ethics and Integrity in Government, [Personnel Rule 6.02](#), [Sexual Harassment Policy](#), [Violence Prevention in the Workplace Policy](#), all applicable laws and regulations, all applicable laws and regulations, and the directives of their agency.

3. Definitions

- a. **"Social Media"** includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or chat room as well as any other form of electronic communication, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, Instagram, etc.

4. Limitation

- a. This Policy is not intended to interfere with rights under the Rhode Island State Labor Relations Act, First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, Article I, § 21 of the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island, or the various whistleblower acts.
- b. Use of Social Media on the State's networks for the performance of the State's business is governed by the State's [Policy on Social Networking](#).

5. Personal Responsibility

- a. State personnel shall comport themselves in accordance with the Rhode Island Code of Ethics 520-RICR-00-00-1, the Employee Conduct/Ethics policy in the State's Employee Handbook, the Governor's Executive Order 15-01, Ethics and Integrity in Government, Personnel Rule 6.02, all applicable policies, laws and regulations, and the directives of their agency.
- b. Public communications by all employees shall comply with Executive Order 15-01, "Integrity and Ethical Principles for Public Employees." The dissemination of information accessed by employees in the course of their duties may be restricted by Executive Order 15-01 (Jan. 6, 2015), and other laws, regulations, and agency directives governing privacy or proprietary, confidential, and other protected information.
- c. Employees are prohibited from posting information on behalf of the State or a State agency on their personal social media pages. Employees should express only their personal opinions and never represent themselves as a spokesperson for the State on their personal social media pages. The Governor's Executive Order 15-01 provides that employees "will not use public service for private gain." Consistent with this principle, employees must not use their official titles, positions, or any authority associated with their public office for private gain. Accordingly, employees must avoid referencing their titles, positions, or any authority associated with their position on their personal social media accounts in any manner that would create an appearance that the State or their agency endorses their personal activities.
- d. Where confusion or doubt is likely to arise regarding the personal nature of the employee's social media activities, employees are encouraged to include a clear and conspicuous disclaimer clarifying that their social media communications reflect only their personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of their agency or the State.
- e. Likewise, employees who are affiliated with outside organizations in their personal capacity must ensure that any references made to their official title, position, or agency

are done in a manner that does not create the appearance that their employing agency or the State sanctions or endorses the activities of the outside organization.

- f. Posts that could be reasonably viewed as maliciously false, threatening or intimidating of other State personnel or members of the public, or that constitute harassment or bullying will not be tolerated (See, [Violence Prevention in the Workplace Policy](#)). Examples of this type of conduct include defamatory posts and posts that contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other status which is protected by state or federal law or policy.

6. Use of Government Time and Property

The Governor's Executive Order 15-01 provides that employees' acts "will be guided and inspired by a commitment to public service," and that employees are to "properly care for and preserve all public property" within their custody or control. Accordingly, when employees are on-duty, they shall use official time in an honest effort to perform official duties. This requirement limits the extent to which employees may access and use their personal social media accounts while on duty. Unless otherwise authorized, use of a personal social media account, if done on official time and/or with government resources, constitutes a misuse of official time and/or government resources.

7. Honesty and Accuracy

Never post any information or rumors that are knowingly false about the state, agency, fellow employees, consultants, clients, customers, vendors, or suppliers.

8. Use of Personal Social Media Sites Outside of Work

Employees are prohibited from making statements on social media on behalf of their agencies or in their official work capacities unless given the authority to do so. For further information, see the State's [Policy on Social Networking](#).

9. Official Social Media Accounts are Not for Personal/Non-Official Use

Various State agencies maintain official social media accounts for use in conducting official business. Each agency determines the purposes for which its official accounts may be used. When employees use these official accounts, they must do so in accordance with applicable agency directives, regulations, and policies. Put simply, official accounts are for official purposes.

10. Repercussions for Noncompliance

Violations of this policy and procedures may be subject to disciplinary action up to and

including dismissal.

11. Retaliation

The State prohibits taking adverse action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

12. Signatures



Director of Administration

9/17/2020

Date