


Grant County Personnel Policy

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APPROVED:  Cindy Carter, Chair, Board of County Commissioners	10-09-17 Date Signed
LAST REVISED: 07/25/17	CONTACT: Human Resources

518 – Social Media

518.1 Specifics: Grant County recognizes that Social Media presents opportunity and risk to individual County agencies, departments, employees and the County as a whole. Grant County has a business need to augment traditional communication methods with the use of social media channels. This policy establishes Countywide social media use policies, protocols and procedures intended to mitigate associated risks from use of this technology on and through County property where possible, and is intended to serve as a risk management policy document.

Generally, this policy is to provide Elected Officials, Department Heads, and employees with:

518.1.1 The specific rules and limitations governing the use of social media for County-related business or programs in order to safeguard the County's compliance with governmental regulations including, but not limited to, public records/retention requirements; and

518.1.2 Notice that certain social media activities engaged in by employees have the potential to create risks and legal issues for the County *and/or* its employees.

518.1.3 It is the intent of Grant County to implement this policy through its availability, training and education.

518.1.4 Policy terms, rules, and conditions apply to all employees of Grant County.

518.1.5 Further, Grant County reserves the right to amend or revise this policy.

518.2 Definitions

518.2.1 Social Media: For the purpose of this policy, social media concerns interaction with external websites or services based on participant contributions to the content. At all times material herein, social media shall be defined, but not be limited to, web and mobile based technologies that facilitate communications, social interactions and dialogue between individuals, communities and organizations. Examples include, but are not limited to:

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Magazines, Internet Forums, Weblogs, Social Blogs, Micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter), Wikis, Pod Casts, Photographs, Pictures, Video (e.g., YouTube), Rating and Social Networking and Bookmarking (e.g., Facebook) with technologies including, but not limited to, blogs, picture sharing, v-logs, wall posting, e-mail, instant messaging, music sharing, crowd-sourcing and voice over IP.

- 518.2.2 Employees: Elected Officials (EOs), Department Heads (DHs), and employees that are full time, part time, hourly, temporary/seasonal, and all other employees. This policy shall also apply to all County interns/volunteers. Provided: this policy should not be construed to extend employee status to any intern/volunteer.
- 518.2.3 Libel: For the purposes of this policy, libel is defined as a false and unprivileged publication by writing, printing, picture, effigy, or other fixed representation to the eye, which exposes any person to hatred, contempt, ridicule, or obloquy, or harm to reputation, or which causes the person to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injure the person in the person's occupation.
- 518.2.4 Unprotected Speech: For the purpose of this policy, unprotected speech includes a social media communication by an employee concerning the County, its management, and/or another employee. In the event it is determined that the interests of the government in promoting efficient operations outweigh the interests of the employee in commenting on matters of public concern, the employee may be disciplined for such speech. Unprotected speech includes:
- (a) Speech that is prohibited and/or subject to governmental regulations and includes, but may not be limited to, communications which may be construed as lewd and obscene, profane, libelous, insulting, humiliating, abusive, hostile, and/or considered fighting words;
 - (b) Threats, as they constitute intimidation;
 - (c) Repeating, disseminating, or sharing confidential information; and
 - (d) Stating, sharing, or posting discriminatory comments which may be construed as creating a hostile or abusive working environment.

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518.3 Procedure

518.3.1 Authorization for County Business Use of Social Media.

Authorization for use of social media for County business must be obtained in advance, as follows:

(a) EOs/DHs are responsible for conducting a need assessment prior to submitting a request for access to one or more specific social media sites for County business. The request must:

- (1) Be in writing, accompanied by a need assessment;
- (2) Specify the names and job titles of all employees anticipated to have access to the social media site;
- (3) Identify by name and title the individual in the office/department that will supervise and actively monitor employee use of the social media site; and

(4) Be submitted to Human Resources for review.

(b) Human Resources shall have the discretion to submit the EO/DH request to the Board of County Commissioners for review and approval.

518.3.2 County Business Usage Standards

(a) Any social media site approved for access is to be used only for the County-related work/programs for which it was approved.

(b) The social media site is to be used for the posting of County information only:

- (1) It must not be enabled for the receipt of responding information, materials, opinions, or communication of any kind from internal or external parties accessing the site;
- (2) The posting of County information is used as a "one way" informational tool, link, or notice with information on how the public and/or clients may access the County office/department's official County website, office, and/or staff; and

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- (3) The employee creating and/or updating the site's posting must create a printout, copy, .pdf, or any other acceptable form of public record and keep same filed in an organized fashion that is readily available for inspection, requests for public records, and conformance to the County's records retention schedule. Questions regarding the form of public record and/or records retention schedule should be directed to the County's Public Records Officer and to the supervising EO or DH immediately.
- (4) Employees designated by the supervising EO or DH to write or post items on social media sites created for County business act as additional public spokespersons for the department, division, and/or the County. The County expects employees to adhere to best practices and to use common sense when using social media as authorized by the supervising EO or DH. In the interest of risk management, employees should be sure that all social media content placed on sites created for County business be consistent with County values and professional standards.

518.3.3 Statutory and Other Usage Standards/Matters

- (a) Employees using social media for County work are subject to federal and state mandates for the safeguarding of confidential, exempt, and/or sensitive information.
- (b) Posting or transmittal of any work product, data, and/or information that is protected or prohibited by federal, state, and/or county laws, policies, or guidelines through social media is expressly forbidden.
- (c) Employees shall be prohibited from using personal electronic devices to create, access and/or transmit County work product. Personal cell phones and cell phone records, computers, personal e-mail accounts, etc. are all "auditable" and open to public record if/when used for County work. Employees are not entitled to any reasonable expectation of privacy regarding electronically produced County work or work related matters, whether the medium used belongs to Grant County or is the personal property of the employee.
- (d) Employees are prohibited from posting libelous or remotely libelous statements as defined within this policy at work, and/or regarding work, on County communication networks.

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- (e) Non-public and confidential information, such as information related to co-workers, personnel data, medical information, claims or lawsuits against the County, should never be shared.

518.3.4 Social Media Content Ownership

- (a) Grant County is committed to complying with the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) which requires that a governmental entity capture, store, and retrieve all materials written, created, transmitted, etc. in the conduct of its business.
 - (1) Grant County has a property and proprietary interest in all of its social media business accounts and log-in information on its employees' work-related social media networks and equipment.
 - (2) Employees are prohibited from using the County's accounts for the purpose of posting personal information, pictures, and other non-business related content.
 - (3) Grant County Technology Services shall act as the administrator for all social media sites, accounts, user names, and passwords.

518.3.5 Compliance/Non-Compliance

- (a) Every County employee must read and sign an acknowledgement of having received and read Policy 500, Use of County Resources, Section 518, *Social Media*. This form is provided by the Human Resources Department at employee orientation. Refusal to read and sign the policy may be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination of employment.
 - (1) Human Resources (for new hires) or the employee's supervising EO or DH (for existing employees) will discuss this policy with the employee and sign where indicated on the Acknowledgement; and
 - (2) The signed, original Acknowledgement must be provided to Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's HR file.
- (b) All incidents of potential or alleged non-compliance with this policy must be immediately reported to a supervisor and/or Human Resources for evaluation and/or investigation.

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- (1) The County will take action, whenever possible and as quickly as practical, to remove or prevent the potential for Unprotected Speech as defined hereinabove from occurring.
- (2) If evidence is found to exist to support the allegations of policy non-compliance by an employee, the County may take corrective action up to and including termination of employment.