

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

This policy establishes guidelines for employees to navigate social media sites with regards to County information and appropriate use of social media.

### **II. SCOPE**

This applies to all employees in all locations of Kootenai County.

### **III. POLICY**

Kootenai County respects the right of employees to write blogs and use social networking sites and does not want to discourage employees from self-publishing and self-expression. It does not discriminate against employees who use these media for personal interest and affiliations or other lawful purposes. This policy is not intended to limit or infringe upon employees' protected legal rights.

### **IV. GUIDELINES**

1. Employees shall not use County-owned equipment, including computers, company-licensed software or other electronic equipment, nor facilities or company time, to conduct personal blogging or social networking activities unless authorized by the employee's Elected Official or Department Head or in compliance with Computer Use policy.
2. Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the County and its Elected Officials, for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the County.
3. Employees are cautioned that speech, whether on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the County. Employees should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon the County.
4. Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access solely as a result of their employment without prior written permission from their Elected Official or Department Head.
5. Employees shall not communicate information gained solely by reason of their employment; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of Kootenai County without express authorization of the employee's Elected Official or Department Head.
6. Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
7. Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any speech known to be false about Kootenai County, its Elected Officials, employees, customers or suppliers of the County.

8. For safety and security reasons, it is suggested that employees do not disclose their employment with the County nor shall they post information pertaining to any other member of the County without their permission. It is suggested that employees not do the following:

- a. Display County logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages.
- b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as employees of the County.

9. If an employee chooses to disclose their employment with the County on social media platforms, the employee should include a disclaimer, such as: "The views expressed on this (blog, website) are my own and do not reflect the opinions of Kootenai County."

10. Employee's are cautioned that they may be subject to civil litigation for:

- a. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
- b. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
- c. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
- d. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

11. Employees shall not create a link from their blog, website or other social networking site to Kootenai County's internal or external website, without the express permission of the employee's Elected Official or Department Head.

12. Employees are cautioned that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.

13. Employees are cautioned that they should review the privacy and acceptable use agreements for social media sites.

14. Employees should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the County at any time without prior notice.

15. Employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Before creating online content, or commenting on other sites, employees should consider some of the risks that are involved.

16. Reporting violations - Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her Elected Official or Department Head immediately for follow-up action.

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Resolution 2013-05, February 13, 2013

Resolution 2013-24, March 13, 2013

RELATED POLICIES

Policy No. 410 – Standards of Conduct Policy No. 430 – Employee Performance and Discipline

Policy No. 425 – Computer Use