



Fitchburg State University

Police Department

Subject: SOCIAL MEDIA

Reference: IACLEA: 4.1.4

Effective Date:

September 29, 2020

Review Date:

February 8, 2022

By Order of: Michael J. Cloutier, Chief of Police

General Order

4.1.4

PURPOSE:

The Fitchburg State University Police Department recognizes the emerging and evolving trends of technology have changed how people communicate and convey information on a daily basis. This evolution has led to the use of social media platforms as a significant communication method for the vast majority of the public, including our employees. While the Department has addressed concerns of employee speech and behavior in ***General Order 4.1.1 Professional Conduct***, the ability/possibility of the content of a social media post to be available to the general public or go "viral" creates specific concerns that the Department will address in this policy. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology, will occur and new tools will emerge.

DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- B. **Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- C. **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- D. **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo- and video-sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites.
- E. **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

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- F. **Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

PRECAUTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I. Department Use

A. Department-Sanctioned Presence

1. Where possible, the Department-created social media page shall include notification that the page is not monitored 24/7, and provide the number to the department's communication center.
2. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Department's official website.
3. All Department-related social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief, or designee, and follow the social media policy of the university.
4. Pages for specific units or programs within the Department must be approved by the Chief or designee. Care must be taken to maintain the integrity of the Department's brand online.
5. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Department and have Department contact information prominently displayed.
6. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology, records management, Department, and University policies.
 - a. Fitchburg State University has in place several policies to include Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources that govern the use of university computers, Wi-Fi, the network, which can be located online:
<https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices-services-directory/technology/policies/>

II. Department-Sanctioned Use

A. Department personnel representing the Department via social media outlets shall:

1. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Department and adhere to all Department standards of conduct.
2. Identify themselves as a member of the Department.
3. Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information.

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4. Not conduct political activities or private business.
5. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
6. Does not conflict with the distribution or information governed under **General Order 12.3 Public Relation and Information**

B. Uses

1. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
 - a. Missing persons;
 - b. Wanted persons;
 - c. Gang participation;
 - d. Crimes perpetrated online;
 - e. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
2. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
 - a. Providing crime prevention tips;
 - b. Offering online-reporting opportunities;
 - c. Sharing crime maps and data;
 - d. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes;
 - e. Sharing information and events with on-campus stakeholders/partners.
3. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
 - a. Road closures;
 - b. Special events;
 - c. Weather emergencies;
 - d. Campus emergencies
 - e. Missing or endangered persons.
4. Social media may be used for:
 - a. Recruiting;
 - b. Advertising employment opportunities;
 - c. Publicizing volunteer positions;
 - d. Offering training opportunities;
 - e. Sharing news about the department;

III. PERSONAL USE

Barring state law or binding employee contracts to the contrary, Department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:

- A. Department personnel 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

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Department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, or negatively impact the public perception of the Department.

- B. As public employees, Department personnel are cautioned that speech, on or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties is **not protected** under the First Amendment, and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Department. Department personnel should assume their speech and related activity on social media sites reflects upon their office and this Department.
- C. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the Chief, or designee.
- D. Department personnel may not display Department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages that reflect negatively on the Department.
- E. When using social media, Department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain indefinitely. Adherence to the Department's Code of Conduct, Ethics, and Sexual Harassment Policy is required in the personal use of social media.
- F. Department personnel should be aware that speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, sexual orientation, or a protected class of individuals may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer's testimony in criminal proceedings.
- G. Department personnel may not divulge information gained because of their authority; make any statements, speeches, endorsements, or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views of the Department without express authorization.
- H. Department personnel should expect any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Department at any time.
- I. Department personnel should be aware 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.

IACLEA 4.1.4 a & b

Approval:



Chief of Police

2/8/22
Date