



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. POLICY

The District of Columbia's Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) understands that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, the DFS has established these standards for appropriate use of social media.

This policy applies to all employees who work for the DFS.

II. STANDARDS

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, social media can mean many things. 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 a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the DFS, as well as any other form of electronic communication that might reasonably become public.

DFS further understands that the use of technology items has grown quite considerably over the past few years, and many employees and their families consider their electronic communication, photography and recording devices to be a daily life necessity. DFS also recognizes that these devices - when used inappropriately by employees - can place the employees and DFS in dangerous territory regarding the electronic communication of confidential, privileged or private information and/or the communication of content expressly prohibited in the work place.

Most electronic communication activities are governed by many of the same principles and guidelines embodied in long-standing policies of DFS and the District of Columbia. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for your electronic communications. Before creating electronic content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Bear in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow employees - or otherwise adversely affects D.C. residents, visitors to the District, vendors, people who work on behalf of the District of Columbia or DFS, or DFS's legitimate business interests, or the public's confidence in DFS - may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

A. KNOW AND FOLLOW THE RULES

Carefully read and review this policy along with the following guidelines, and ensure that your electronic communications are consistent with the policies of DFS, including but not limited to, the following:

1. District of Columbia Ethics Policy,
2. DFS Security Policy,
3. DFS Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, which includes, but is not limited to sexual harassment.

Inappropriate electronic communication that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, retaliation, sexual innuendo, threats of violence, or similarly inappropriate or unlawful content will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

B. BE RESPECTFUL

Always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, residents and visitors of the District, vendors, or people who work on behalf of the District. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers or your immediate supervisor, rather than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, or as disparaging to customers, employees, or suppliers, or that might constitute harassment or bullying, even if it is done after work hours, on a personal electronic device, or from home. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by federal law, District law, or policies of DFS.

C. BE HONEST AND ACCURATE

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know or should know to be false or misleading about DFS, fellow employees, residents or visitors of the District, vendors, or people working on behalf of District.

D. DO NOT POST STATEMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEO OR AUDIO THAT COULD BE VIEWED AS MALICIOUS, OBSCENE, THREATENING, INTIMIDATING, DISPARAGING, BULLYING, OR HARASSING.

1. Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for DFS. If DFS is a subject of the content you are creating, make it clear that your views do not represent those of the DFS, fellow employees, District residents, and visitors to the District, vendors, suppliers or people working on behalf of the District. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or related to subjects associated with DFS, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of DFS or the District. It is best to include a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the government of the District of Columbia or the Department of Forensic Sciences."
2. Maintain the confidentiality of the DFS's private or confidential information. Private or confidential information may include personnel information of District government employees, communications with government attorneys, private health information of employees and citizens served by DFS, information regarding juveniles, criminal investigations, death investigations, public health investigations, etc. Do not post or, otherwise, make publicly available internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related communications that are confidential, privileged or protected from public disclosure.

E. USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

Employees should refrain from using social media while on duty and while operating DFS equipment, unless it is work-related as authorized by your manager or consistent with DFS policy, District policy, or District law. Employees should understand that the use of District electronic equipment may be monitored. Do not use your District email address to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal electronic communications.

F. USING PERSONAL CELLPHONES, CAMERAS AND RECORDING TECHNOLOGY AT WORK

This policy shall directly apply to personally owned cellular telephones or communication devices with cellular telephone capabilities and any device that can photograph or capture or record still images, video or sound or any combination of the above. Employees shall not directly or indirectly:

1. Post or transmit the following types of information:
 - a. Pictures, depictions, descriptions, or personal information of any victim, defendant, suspect, United States Attorneys, defense attorneys, or any other stakeholder;
 - b. Pictures, depictions or description of any crime, fire, or accident scene; or

- c. Information involving previous, current, or future criminal or public health investigations.
- 2. Photograph, video record, or audio record the following:
 - a. Depictions, descriptions, or personal information of any victim, defendant, suspect, United States Attorney, defense attorney, or any other stakeholder;
 - b. Depictions or descriptions of any crime, fire, or accident scene;
 - c. Depictions or descriptions of any employee, law enforcement officer, or other person performing his or her official duties; or
 - d. Official DFS business, meetings, or activities involving confidential, classified, or information impacting the security and welfare of the District or its residents or visitors.
- 3. Release to any other individual, group, organization, online social network, non-DFS website or media outlet- this includes distribution among DFS employees or among neighboring forensic or law enforcement organizations any photographs, still images, video or audio recording of official DFS activities without prior DFS management authorization.
- 4. Post images of any other DFS employee or official DFS activities on their personal social media pages (including, but not limited to, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter). However, employees may reference their own employment at DFS, or their vocation, e.g. forensic scientist, crime scene scientist, public health lab employee. Employees who reference their employment with DFS shall include a disclaimer that the opinion s/he posts are personal and not the opinion of the DFS or the District of Columbia government.
- 5. Post, transmit, or otherwise distribute any information to which they have access as a result of their employment.

G. REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of any posting, website, or webpage that violates this policy shall immediately notify his or her supervisor and provide a report, which includes details as to where the posting, website, or webpage can be located.

H. SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES

Employees are cautioned to be mindful of potential safety and security issues they may encounter when identifying themselves as an employee of DFS when participating in social media including, but not limited to:

1. Disclosing home address, phone number(s), and other personally identifiable information.
2. Transmitting or posting pictures or depictions of any DFS issued uniform or any part of a DFS CSS uniform including personally purchased items which reference or resemble DFS badge, patch, logo or issued uniform or equipment, or
3. Transmitting or posting pictures or depictions of any issued DFS equipment including vehicles.

I. RETALIATION IS PROHIBITED

DFS prohibits taking negative 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 or for cooperating in an investigation of a possible deviation from this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

J. EXCEPTIONS

This policy does not prohibit employees from the following:

1. Reporting violations or concerns under the District Whistleblower Protection Act. Information can be found at <http://dchr.dc.gov/page/whistleblower-protections-and-obligations>.
2. Reporting waste, fraud, and abuse. Information can be found at <http://oig.dc.gov/services/suggest.shtm>.
3. Disclosing or discussing information regarding terms and conditions of employment.
4. Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, an employee is not prohibited from posting to social media if: (a) he or she is not on duty; (b) it is clear that he or she is expressing a personal viewpoint and not that of DFS; (c) he or she does not appear in a DFS uniform or clothing with a DFS logo or insignia or the posting cannot otherwise be associated with DFS by use of its name, logo, insignia, or other identifying marks; (d) he or she does not post any information or

material which was received as a result of his or her employment; and (e) he or she does not violate any District of Columbia law. Violations of DFS policy including, but not limited to those referenced in Section A, may still result in discipline or termination. Nothing in this policy abrogates or alters those prior existing policies.

5. Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, an employee shall not be prohibited from exercising his or her First Amendment Rights.

K. MEDIA CONTACTS

Employees should not speak to the media on DFS's behalf. All media inquiries should be directed to Keith St. Clair, the Public Information Officer (202.215.6740).

L. FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact DFS's General Counsel, Christine Funk (202.727.7830).