

I. PURPOSE

The Department of Youth and Community Development (“DYCD”) recognizes that organizations providing DYCD-funded programs (“Providers” of “Programs”) and Provider employees, directors, volunteers, etc. (together, “Staff”) use social media and messaging applications. Such applications are powerful tools that can enhance education, communication, and learning, but also present various risks. This Social Media Policy governs Program-related use of social media and messaging applications by Providers and Staff and, in particular, interactions with non-adult Program participants (“Participants”). The goal of this Policy is to maximize the benefits of social media and messaging applications to Programs while limiting the downsides.

II. DEFINITIONS

1. “Social Media” includes but is not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Tumblr, Tinder, Instagram, and other forms of social networks and user-generated media, such as wikis, blogs and other on-line journals and diaries, as well as chat rooms and bulletin boards.
2. “Messaging” means the creation or transmission of electronic communication sent and received by cellular phone or messaging application including but not limited to standard short message service communications, Kik Messenger, Skype Instant Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and related services and applications.
3. “Professional Social Media and Messaging” is Provider-related Social Media or Messaging activity and accounts; this includes Program-related activities (e.g., a Facebook page for an afterschool program or an Instagram account showcasing Participants engaged in Program activities) and non-Program related activities (e.g., a Facebook page highlighting a Provider’s work).
4. “Personal Social Media and Messaging” is non Provider-related Social Media or Messaging activity and accounts (e.g., an individual’s Facebook page or a Twitter account for personal use).

III. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA & MESSAGING

1. Communication with Participants: Staff may not communicate or otherwise interact with Participants through Personal Social Media and Messaging.
 - a. This provision applies to tagging, liking, following, posting, friending, texting, and other Social Media and Messaging interactions.
 - b. This provision does not apply to interactions among relatives or in emergency situations which require urgent communication; in the latter case Staff must notify a supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.
2. Use of Participant Name and Image: Staff may not post photos of Participants, use Participant names, or otherwise discuss Participants or disclose Participant identities through Personal Social Media and Messaging.
 - a. This provision does not prohibit Social Media activities involving the distribution of photos or other materials featuring events and programming which involve Participants where such Social Media activities are undertaken at the request of the Provider and in order to promote the Provider and/or Program.

IV. PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA & MESSAGING

1. Communication with Participants: All Professional Social Media and Messaging communication or interaction with Participants must be reasonably related to the mission of the affiliated Provider and Program.
2. Parent Notification: Providers must notify parents and guardians of Participant involvement or interaction with Professional Social Media and Messaging. Providers must outline the purpose of such Professional Social Media Messaging and the extent to which Participants will be involved. Further, Providers must address any parent or guardian questions that arise and accommodate reasonable concerns.
3. Professional Email Address: Staff engaging in Professional Social Media and Messaging activities must utilize only professional email addresses for Professional Social Media and Messaging accounts. Staff must not use personal email addresses for Professional Social Media activities, and Staff must maintain any Personal Social Media presence entirely separate from any Professional Social Media. Further, Staff may not engage in Messaging using personal mobile devices or cellular phones.
4. Monitoring: To the extent possible, Provider supervisors or their designees must be given administrator rights or access to Professional Social Media and Messaging accounts and must monitor such accounts to ensure that any content, comments or related materials are not inappropriate or offensive. Supervisors or their designees must maintain a list of all Professional Social Media and Messaging accounts that feature interactions with Participants.

V. ALTERNATIVES & GUIDANCE

1. Professional Accounts: Although Staff generally may not communicate with Participants using Personal Social Media and Messaging, Staff may create dedicated Professional Social Media and Messaging accounts that comply with this Policy in order to communicate with Participants. For example, Staff may create professional Facebook accounts with which to interact with Participants.
2. Email-to-Text: Staff persons who currently use text messaging to interact with Participants may instead use email-to-text messaging from professional email addresses. Email-to-text allows for users to quickly and easily send and receive text messages from email accounts.
3. Personal Social Media Guidance: Staff and Providers should exercise caution, sound judgment and common sense when using Social Media and Messaging. Providers and Staff are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings in order to control access to Social Media and Messaging.