

BROWN COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT	Page 1 of 4 Effective Date: 01-01-14 Revision Date:	Policy #: 1 - 1650 Table of Contents
Section: General Operations	References: N/A	
Subject: Social Media		

PURPOSE:

To establish the department's position on the utility and management of social media. Also provide guidance on its management, administration and oversight.

Social media may be a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about: missing persons, wanted persons, gang participation, crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyber bullying, cyber stalking); and photos or videos of a crime posted by an offender. Social media may be used when considering candidates for hire.

APPLICABILITY:

Department wide

DEFINITIONS:

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses.

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

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 (Facebook, Instagram, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Snapchat, Nixle), photo and videosharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

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

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

A. Internal Websites Maintained by Probation:

1. All department created social media sites or pages (overt or covert) shall be approved by the director. When possible, overt social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have contact information prominently displayed.
 - a. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - b. Content is subject to public records laws. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
 - c. If an opinion section is set up, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department or county.
 - d. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
 - e. Staff shall not discuss political activities or promote private business.
 - f. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Personal Use:

1. Precautions and Prohibitions: Barring state law or binding employment 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 this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are

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important. Staff may not impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.

- b. As public employees, staff is cautioned that speech on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties – that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities – is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon them as a professional and this department.
 - c. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any confidential information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the director.
 - d. Staff shall not display department logos, uniforms, badges, or similar identifying items on personal web pages.
 - e. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the department’s code of ethics is required in the personal use of social media. 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 protective.
 - f. Department personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.
 - g. Engaging in prohibited speech may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an employees’ testimony in criminal proceedings. Department personnel are subject to discipline up to and including termination for violating these policies.
 - h. Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization.
2. Reporting violations: Any employee 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 the director as soon as time permits and no later than the next working day.

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3. The use of department computers by department personnel to access personal social media sites is prohibited unless permission is received by Director.

CROSS REFERENCE:

[Code of Ethics](#)

ATTACHMENTS/FORMS:

N/A