

GKB COMMUNITY HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Social media are powerful communications tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and organizational voice, GKB Head Start has adopted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media. Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace. Also included are personal websites and blogs.

Both in professional and organizational roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with co-workers, clients, donors, media, and other community members apply online as in the real world. Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

SECTION 1: POLICIES FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

Employees who violate the agency policies regarding social media do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information (including photographs) about GKB Head Start, clients, or employees. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPPA, as well as Head Start and NAEYC Codes of Conduct. Staff will adhere to all applicable agency privacy and confidentiality policies.
- **Social networking sites are not appropriate forums to engage in differences of opinion with respect to work related issues, engage in criticism of management or co-workers or address concerns regarding the performance or competence of employees.** Staff are prohibited from posting comments (and photographs) that are defamatory to the agency, staff or clients.
- **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others.
- **Don't use agency logos for endorsements:** Do not use the Head Start logo or any other agency images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use Head Start's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

- Respect agency time and property: GKB Head Start computers and time on the job are reserved for agency-related business as approved by supervisors. The agency reserves the right to monitor social networking sites and to disable the use of such sites on agency computers.

SECTION 2: BEST PRACTICES

These guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

- Think twice before posting: Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the agency. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a meeting or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input.
- Strive for accuracy: Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the agency in any capacity.
- Be respectful: Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the agency and its organizational voice.
- Remember your audience: Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective clients, peers and community members. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.
- On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a GKB Head Start staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the agency.
- Photography: Photographs posted on social media sites easily can be appropriated by visitors. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.

SECTION 3: ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

If you post on behalf of the agency, the following policies must be adhered to in addition to all policies and best practices listed above:

- Obtain permission from the Director: All organizational web pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content.

- Acknowledge who you are: If you are representing Head Start when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.
- Link back to the agency: Whenever possible, link back to the GKB Head Start Web site. Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the Head Start Web environment.
- Protect the organizational voice: Posts on social media sites should protect the agency's organizational voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste.