

PEND OREILLE COUNTY  
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR USE

**POLICY 200**

**COUNTY OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

**I. PURPOSE**

To address the roles, responsibilities, and best practices for Pend Oreille County's use of social media to connect with the community. Pend Oreille County departments are encouraged to utilize social media to openly and progressively reach a broader audience while keeping in mind the legal parameters of election laws and record-keeping requirements. This policy establishes standards for the use of social media to further the goals of the County and the mission of its departments, where appropriate.

**II. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees, departments, volunteers, multi-member boards, bodies created by official actions, and any subcommittees thereof, which are acting on behalf of the County. The policy governs the use of various forms of social media to disseminate information to the public. Social media is not to be used as a mechanism for conducting official county business such as making policy decisions, providing formal public notice, or discussion of topics of legal or fiscal significance that have not already been released to the public.

**III. DEFINITIONS:** For this policy, the following definitions apply unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

County: means Pend Oreille County, unless otherwise specified. All references to specific departments of elected officials are to Pend Oreille County departments and elected officials, unless otherwise specified.

County resources: any information, data, financial, service, software, equipment (County-issued cell phones, personal computers, laptops, etc.) or other property or resources under the employee's official control, direction, care and custody or to which he/she has access.

Public Record: Per RCW 42.56.010, "public record" includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics.

Social Media: Social media includes, but is not limited to, the following methods to disseminate information: blogs, micro blogs, wikis, social networking sites, multimedia sharing sites, bulletin boards, and any platform that allows for the creation of a public profile and direct, and unfiltered two-way communications with the public outside the County's regular email system.

**IV. STANDARDS FOR USE**

- 4.1 All Pend Oreille County social media sites will be subject to approval by the County Commissioners after consultation with the ITS Director.

- 4.2 The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law.
- 4.3 Pend Oreille County websites (<http://pendoreilleco.org/>) will remain the County's primary and predominant internet presence. Pend Oreille County encourages the use of social media sites as a means to:
- a) Disseminate time-sensitive or emergency information as quickly as possible to a broad audience; and
  - b) Promote, announce, and address the County's available services to the public; and
  - c) Provide the public with an additional means to explore an open and transparent government platform.
- 4.4 In order to ensure appropriate retention of public records, content posted by the County on County Social Media sites should not be original source content (content that has not been created anywhere else that only exists on the Social Media site). Content posted should be a secondary copy of information that has already been published in hard copy or posted on a County website at <http://pendoreilleco.org/>
- 4.5 Social media sites should contain links directing users back to the County's official Web sites for in-depth information, forms, documentation or any online services necessary to conduct business with Pend Oreille County.
- 4.6 All communications between the County and members of the public are subject to public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW. This must be clearly displayed to all site visitors.
- 4.7 If comments or feedback are enabled, the site must not restrict the public's First Amendment rights of free speech. Comments should be addressed or returned directly and privately, not in a public forum. No comments or feedback may be removed by the social media site administrators without prior consultation with County legal counsel.
- 4.8 Pend Oreille County reserves the right to disable public comments from being posted on any County social media platforms.
- 4.9 Commissioners, Officials and members of Boards should not comment or otherwise communicate with each other on any County Social Media site; participating in online discussions may constitute a meeting under the Open Public Meetings Act.
- 4.10 No social media site may endorse or recommend any specific commercial activity or vendor. This includes "friending," "liking," "linking," becoming a "fan," "watching," or "following" any nongovernmental entities. Other government sites and some non-profit entities may be mentioned and linked on the social media site, but only to the extent they are organizations directly related to county services or the conduct of government. Endorsing or appearing to endorse private citizens, political groups or commercial profiles is expressly disallowed.
- 4.11 No content or comments shall be posted on any County Social Media sites on behalf of the County unless specifically pre-authorized by the Elected Official, department director or designee.
- 4.12 Main profile photo shall be the standardized Pend Oreille County logo or standardized department logo (if already identifiable with the department).

## **V. ADMINISTRATION**

- 5.1 The Information Technology Systems Department (ITS) will maintain a list of available social media tools which are approved for County use. Requests for use of new tools must be approved by the County Commissioners in advance of their use by the requestor.
- 5.2 Requests for creation of a County Social Media site must be made to the County Commissioners. The County Commissioners will establish guidelines for consistency with other County Social Media sites, and coordinate with the ITS to ensure compliance with public records retention requirements.
- 5.3 The County Commissioners will maintain a list of all existing County Social Media sites. Departments are responsible for providing and updating site host information, login and password information, email information, access to all administrative privileges, and all individuals authorized to post content.
- 5.4 E-mail accounts associated with Pend Oreille County social media sites must be “@pendoreille.org” accounts.
- 5.5 Should the social media presence no longer meet a business need, the department will contact the County Commissioners with a request to close the account. The County Commissioners will ensure that closure is done in a way that complies with applicable processes for the administration of social media accounts.
- 5.6 All County social media sites shall comply with the specific terms and conditions, user agreements, or any other contractual agreements required by the particular social media platform being utilized.

## **VI. MONITORING**

- 6.1 The County will monitor employee use of social media sites as it does any other internet activity under the County’s Personnel Policy No. 180 section 7.

## **VII. DISCIPLINE & ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 7.1 Department Directors and Board or Elected Officials will be responsible for the content and upkeep of their social media sites, though they may designate duties to specific employees.
- 7.2 Employees should ensure that any comments they make on matters of government policy are appropriate to their agency roles, professional, and respect the need to maintain politically neutral County services.
- 7.3 Comments made on behalf of Pend Oreille County on social media sites containing any of the following forms of content shall be prohibited:
  - a) Comments unrelated to the subject matter of the forum, and/or links to material not directly related to the discussion.
  - b) Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
  - c) Profane language or content which is unprofessional.
  - d) Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
  - e) Sexual content or links to sexual content.
  - f) Solicitations of commerce.

- g) Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
- h) Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- i) Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

Employees must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of Pend Oreille County. Violations of this policy may subject the employee to discipline up to and including termination pursuant to Conduct and Work Rules Policy No. 150.

## **VIII. ARCHIVING / PUBLIC RECORDS**

- 8.1 All County departments utilizing Social Media are responsible to capture the records generated by their own online activity, including metadata, and to ensure that the records will be adequately managed within a County records storage system. The terminology “capture” shall mean ensuring that all data uploaded to or entered on a social media site will be retained and archived per public record laws.
- 8.2 All information posted to County Social Media Sites is subject to State of Washington public records laws, including chapter 42.56 RCW (Public Records Act) and chapter 40.14 RCW (Preservation and Destruction Public Records). A posting or comment is a public record if it has been made or received in connection with the transaction of county business (full definition in RCW 40.14.010). All Social Media Sites shall contain a statement advising that comments posted thereon may be subject to public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW.
- 8.3 Relevant records retention schedules apply to all County Social Media content in all media formats including audio, video, images, graphics, data, metadata, and text. The content must be retained in native format for the minimum period required by state retention schedules.
- 8.4 If a site posting is a duplicate or secondary copy of a record that is already maintained elsewhere for retention and disclosure purposes, then the content posted to the social media site may be deleted any time after it has served its intended use. If the site content is an original or primary record (as would be the case with most comments received), the content must be kept for the required minimum retention period in its native electronic format or saved in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible.
- 8.5 The Information Technology Systems Department will employ a third-party social media backup service provider to back up the County’s known social media sites. The backup files will be downloaded to our own network to be included with our established backup processes.

## ***PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA***

### **I. PURPOSE**

To ensure that use of social media among employees of Pend Oreille County is consistent with County policies, all applicable laws, and the individual user's job responsibilities. This policy is not intended to restrict employees from engaging in free speech or protected concerted activity, including discussing their wages, hours and working conditions with other employees.

## II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Elected Officials, Department Heads, employees, and volunteers of Pend Oreille County.

### III. DEFINITIONS: For this policy, the following definitions apply unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

County: means Pend Oreille County, unless otherwise specified. All references to specific departments of elected officials are to Pend Oreille County departments and elected officials, unless otherwise specified.

County resources: any information, data, financial, service, software, equipment (County-issued cell phones, personal computers, laptops, etc.) or other property or resources under the employee's official control, direction, care and custody or to which he/she has access.

Public Record: Per RCW 42.56.010, "public record" includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics.

Social Media: Describes the various forms of online technologies, tools, platforms and applications utilized amongst individuals and organizations for the purpose of sharing user-generated, unfiltered content, opinions, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves. Social media can include text, images, audio and video. Examples of Social Media include, but are not limited to, Facebook and other social networking sites, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, blogging/micro blogging, etc.

### IV. COUNTY OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA – See Policy "Personal Use of Social Media"

### V. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA Personal use guidelines of social media include:

#### Responsibility

Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online.

Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of co-workers or otherwise adversely affects members of the public, customers, suppliers, people who work on behalf of Pend Oreille County or the County's legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### Know and follow the rules

Carefully read the guidelines of the County official use of Social Media Policy along with Personnel Policy Number 180 section 7 and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies.

Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **Be Respectful**

Always be fair and courteous to fellow co-workers, customers, members of the public, suppliers or people who work on behalf of Pend Oreille County. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers or supervisor 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, that disparage customers, members of the public, associates or suppliers, or that might constitute harassment or bullying.

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 or any other status protected by law or company policy.

### **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 to be false about Pend Oreille County, fellow co-workers, members of the public, customers, suppliers, or people working on behalf of Pend Oreille County.

### **Post Only Appropriate and Respectful Content**

Maintain the confidentiality of Pend Oreille County's confidential information. Do not post internal confidential communications.

Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for Pend Oreille County. If Pend Oreille County is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of Pend Oreille County, fellow co-workers or people working on behalf of Pend Oreille County.

If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with Pend Oreille County, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of Pend Oreille County. 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 Pend Oreille County."

### **Using Social Media at Work**

Refrain from using social media while on work time or on equipment we provide, unless it is work-related as authorized by your manager or consistent with County Official Use of Social Media Policy.

Do not use Pend Oreille County email addresses to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.

### **Retaliation is Prohibited**

Pend Oreille County 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 a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Media Contacts**

Employees should not speak to the media on Pend Oreille County's behalf without contacting the County legal counsel and/or their Department Head. All media inquiries should be directed to them. If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact your HR representative.

## **VI. PROTECTED SPEECH**

Employees have a right to engage in protected speech but the line when speech is protected is not always clear so employees should error on the side of caution. For example, speaking as an individual citizen (not an employee) regarding a topic of public concern is protected but the protection is lost if the speech is as an employee regarding private personnel issues (such as complaining about supervisor) or an employee's specific job duties.

Political Speech on the other hand, is highly protected speech. However, employees are prohibited from directly or indirectly using their official authority to coerce, command or advise another employee to pay, lend or contribute anything of value to a political party, committee, organization, agency or person for political purposes.

Additional rights of employees regarding personal communication using social media arise when the speech falls within a "protected concerted activity". This form of communication deals with speech with other employees about wages, hours and working conditions but is unprotected when communicated solely for personal concerns and only on behalf of an individual. For example, individual speech and activities that do not induce group action constitute unprotected speech as concerted activity because it is merely individual complaining.

As the law of public disclosure is always evolving, employees should be aware of the potential for public disclosure of social media postings. If an employee discusses their county work on personal social networking accounts or websites, their posting may be subject to public disclosure laws.