

# [ORGANIZATION'S] SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICIES – a guide

## SCOPE

[ORGANIZATION] considers “social networking” or “Web 2.0” to be the portion of internet activity that includes blogging, as well as the use of the following tools: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, flickr and YouTube. This list is likely to expand, contract or otherwise change based on emerging trends.

## GOALS

### SAMPLE

1. To build and strengthen relationships with health center staff, boards, advocates, patients.
2. To expand our ability to reach, educate and mobilize potential supporters and advocates.
3. To be a significant source in the online environment of information related to health care delivery to medically underserved persons in general and health centers in particular.
4. To expand the reach of our messages via communications channels that more and more individuals, policymakers and the media are using.
5. To boost traffic to the [ORGANIZATION] web site.

## EDITING AND APPROVAL

[List employees who are approved and responsible for online postings]

## PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKING ACTIVITY

[ORGANIZATION] does not maintain separate policies that speak to an employee’s personal social networking activity, but certain general Employee Handbook guidelines do apply.

- Employees may not disclose the organization’s confidential business with anyone who does not work for [ORGANIZATION], including, but not limited to, employees of [ORGANIZATION] members, board members, and [ORGANIZATION] contractors and vendors. (Employee Handbook, “Confidentiality Policy”)
  - *[ORGANIZATION] matters run through the official [ORGANIZATION] social media accounts. Information that an employee thinks might be suitable for social networking*

*distribution should be e-mailed to the day-to-day manager of the official accounts. Should the material be used, the employee may feel free to re-tweet or re-post the information as desired.*

- Employees who participate in political and other public activities on their own time should not identify themselves as [ORGANIZATION] representatives without the prior approval of the CEO. (see Employee Handbook)
- External inquiries must be referred to those who are authorized to respond to them (see Employee Handbook). [List employees responsible]
- Every employee of [ORGANIZATION] is responsible for ethical conduct vis-à-vis [ORGANIZATION]. (see Employee Handbook).

## GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES USING SOCIAL NETWORKING IN AN OFFICIAL [ORGANIZATION] CAPACITY

These guidelines apply to [ORGANIZATION] employees who have been approved by [APPROPRIATE STAFF CONTACT] to communicate in an official [ORGANIZATION] capacity (e.g. updating the [ORGANIZATION] Facebook Page status message, the [ORGANIZATION] Twitter feed, etc.). All of the guidelines for using social networking personally (see above) also apply to using social networking in an official [ORGANIZATION] capacity.

### General Guidelines:

1. **Be professional.** Although you may employ the more conversational tone associated with Web 2.0 communication, you're "representing" [ORGANIZATION] the same way you would in a presentation, a press release or an appearance at an event.
2. **Be productive.** don't over post or post for the sake of posting. Along the same lines: **be interesting!**
3. **Be neutral** except when relaying official [ORGANIZATION] persuasion. For example, be enthusiastic about new funding if an official [ORGANIZATION] statement has been released that expresses [ORGANIZATION'S] excitement and gratitude. But if you're linking to a study that would be of interest to health centers but for which [ORGANIZATION] has no official position, describe it as "relevant" or "topical" rather than "tremendous" or "disappointing!"
4. **Be judicious** when it comes to the notorious back-and-forth of the internet. Focus only on correcting any inaccuracies; don't worry about winning an argument. In all instances, **be civil.**
5. These are common sense: **be honest; be accurate; be respectful.** Also, **be clear and concise;** even status message updates can be written *well* (or poorly).
6. **Be mindful** of [ORGANIZATION] rules *and the law.*
  - a. Fair use/copyright: Do not copy or use another person's or entity's intellectual property as though it were your own. The internet affords ample opportunity to *link to*

whatever materials you deem important to your audience. “Fair use” doctrine in U.S. law allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission from the rights holder, speaking specifically to use for nonprofit or educational purposes; refer questions to the [APPROPRIATE STAFF CONTACT].

- b. Handling of confidential personal or industry-related data: Employees are not to discuss the organization’s confidential business with anyone who does not work for [ORGANIZATION]. Also, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) law always applies. **Do not release personal medical information about patients without consent.** This concerns not only information about a patient’s condition and the use of a patient’s likeness (photography, video, audio, etc.), but also the simple fact that someone is a patient of a given health center.
- c. Laws forbidding any partisan political activity: [ORGANIZATION] should never be a Facebook “Fan” of an elected official or partisan political cause.
- d. When names, photos, user IDs, etc. are involved, secure written permission for use and err on the side of caution.

#### Style/Technical Specifics – BLOGS:

1. Every blog entry should include a byline. The format for the byline is By: Firstname Lastname, where the name is linked either to the author’s biography or his/her contact gateway.
2. Time-specific references should be offered bearing in mind that the entry may not be read on the day or moment of its release. For example, say, “The bill will be introduced today (Tuesday).”
3. “Live blogging” or posts that will be updated later should be described as such. Live blogging is not exempt from review requirements if the author must usually have his/her work cleared by a supervisor before publication.

#### Style/Technical Specifics – FACEBOOK/TWITTER:

[ORGANIZATION] has established style guidelines. Technical limitations (such as the Twitter limit of 140 characters per update) require us to follow some of these rules “as best we can.” Also, these media present specific opportunities to render our information more accessible and searchable, and [ORGANIZATION] will take advantage of this whenever possible.

1. Whenever possible, spell out Community Health Centers (capitalized) and/or Federally Qualified Health Centers (capitalized). Acceptable shortened forms are health centers (not capitalized) and FQHC or FQHCs. Do not abbreviate the word “health” or the word “center” inside a post, comment, status update or “tweet” about health centers.
2. Facebook and Twitter make extensive use of free “address shortening” services in order to comply with character limits. For example, an address such as <http://www.nachc.com/healthcentersandeconomicstimulus.cfm> may be shortened automatically to an address such as <http://bit.ly/3XOKr>. [ORGANIZATION’S] preferred

shortening service is [bit.ly](https://bit.ly), and [ORGANIZATION] has established a bit.ly account to enable tracking and analytics. When possible, users should establish shortened bit.ly addresses via the [ORGANIZATION] account.

3. Twitter conventions include using hashtags to enhance searchability. The hashtag that has been adopted by health centers in the field is #fqhc. [ORGANIZATION] has also adopted the use of #fqhc. Use this hashtag as appropriate in Twitter updates, at the end of the update. Use sparingly, if at all, on Facebook.