

Duplin County Social Media Policy

Purpose

As a valuable communication tool, social media serves communities to inform and educate its citizens; however, it has the potential to negatively impact organizational, personal, and professional reputations. Because social media usage can cross personal and business lines, Duplin County implements the following social media policy.

Materials and information on Duplin County ("County") sponsored social media sites are provided to share information on matters of public interest related to Duplin County, North Carolina. The County does not operate the sponsored social media hosting systems. Additionally, Duplin County is subject to the terms of use for all County sponsored social media sites and does not control those terms. Accordingly, Duplin County shall not be liable for any damages incurred due to errors, interruptions, inadequacies, or malicious computer code or components on Duplin County sponsored social media sites or their servers.

The materials contained on Duplin County sponsored social media sites are provided "as is," and viewers are under no obligation to use them. The information contained on Duplin County sponsored social media sites is intended to supplement, not replace, the information provided through official Duplin County channels, such as board minutes, committee meetings, news releases, and the County website.

All use of social networking sites must be consistent with applicable state, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies. The County does not warrant the completeness, accuracy, or timeliness of the material on Duplin County sponsored social media sites. The information on Duplin County social media sites is not intended to serve as legal or financial advice. Duplin County disclaims all warranties, expressed or implied, for any of the materials provided on Duplin County sponsored social media sites, including but not limited to links to third parties or any improper or incorrect use of them.

This document establishes countywide social media use policies, protocols, and procedures intended to provide guidance and help mitigate associated risks from using this technology where possible. This policy is maintained by the Public Information Office and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Definitions

- **Comment/Post**—A statement or question made by a Commenter who has consumed content on a social media profile.
- **Commenter**—An individual who consumes content on a social media profile and remarks in any manner regarding that content.
- **Public Information Office**—A department of the County that manages public relations, media communication, and social media for the County's departments and agencies.
- **Public Information Officer**—An employee who manages any or all of Duplin County's social media pages and profiles.
- **Social Media**—Internet-based applications and websites used to share and discuss information. Social media describes the integration of technology, telecommunications, and social interaction via text, image, video, and audio content types. Examples include forums, blogs, microblogs, wikis, social communication sites, social bookmarking, message boards, newsgroups, podcasts, photo sharing, video, real-time web communication, and any similar communication form.

- **Social Media Administrator**—A designated department employee responsible for managing and posting to any department or dedicated County social media profile.
- **Moderated Page/Profile**—A page or profile monitored by a Duplin County employee to ensure all comments and posts are respectful and in accordance with set laws and County policies.
- **Terms of Service**—Policies of various social media websites that govern how each site may be accessed or utilized by users.

Applicability

These guidelines apply to any Duplin County employee, elected official, contractor, vendor, consultant, temporary employee, or volunteer using social media on behalf of a County department or agency or volunteer posting to a personal social media account. County agencies and departments using social media shall achieve full compliance within 30 days of the effective date of this policy.

Media Contacts

Employees should not speak to media or otherwise communicate on behalf of Duplin County without first contacting the Duplin County Public Information Officer. All media inquiries should be directed to the Public Information Officer or the County Manager.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Public Information Office shall act as the social coordinator for all social media accounts and has the authority to audit agency and department social media accounts, remove content that does not comply with this policy, and otherwise enforce compliance with this policy.

Social Media Administrators

- Employees throughout the County who are responsible for managing and posting content to their department-specific social media account(s)
- Employees who have gone through the appropriate training and regularly meet with the Public Information Officer and other social media administrators to stay informed about updates and best practices.
- Social media administrators may only share account password information with authorized staff who have been designated by the department director or his/her designee, approved by the Public Information Officer, and meet the appropriate social media training requirements.
- Social media passwords must conform to the Duplin County password policy established by the Information Technology Department. In addition, account passwords must be immediately reset. The Public Information Officer must be notified when an employee is removed as the social media administrator for that account or terminates from employment.

Acceptable Use

Social media content providers will act and conduct themselves following County policies, specifically including this policy, Human Resources policies, and Information Technology policies. All use of social media networking sites by County employees and persons communicating on behalf of Duplin County will comply with applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations, and County policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, North Carolina's public records law, First Amendment, privacy laws, and Duplin County acceptable use and information sensitivity and security policies. All social media is governed by these policies, as well as the policies outlined in this document.

Records Management

All social media activity is documented and maintained in an easily accessible format that tracks account information and preserves items that may be considered a public record subject to disclosure under North Carolina's public record laws. In addition to contracting with an archiving company, the Public Information Office monitors social media sites regularly.

County agencies and departments are responsible for the administration and deactivation of their social media accounts. Every department/agency with a social media account must register that account with the Public Information Office.

All information posted on any County social media accounts, regardless of who posted it, may be considered a public record as defined under North Carolina General Statute 132-1. Social media providers will forward any public records requests submitted via their social media account to the Public Information Office within one business day of receiving the request. There shall be no expectation of privacy with any social media postings on the County's site(s).

Duplin County Branding

Social media account profiles will identify the account as representing Duplin County and will make clear which agency or department the account supports. Account profiles shall use the County logo or department branding image as the profile image. The profile image will adequately represent the department and be easily recognizable.

Site Monitoring

The Public Information Officer and Social Media Administrators shall monitor department social media accounts regularly. The Public Information Officer and Social Media Administrators shall take prompt corrective action to remove content that does not comply with this policy, or when an issue arises that places, or has the potential to place, Duplin County at risk. All Duplin County social media accounts are backed up by either a service provider or the County itself.

Social Media Administrators will review site activity and content daily, or more frequently if a situation requires such, and inform the Public Information Officer of comments that violate the Social Media Commenting Policy, as outlined below.

Commenting

Social Media Administrators shall post the following comment policy on all Duplin County social media profiles:

The purpose of this page is to present matters of public interest in Duplin County. We welcome viewers to submit their questions, comments, and concerns, but please note that this is a moderated page and not a public forum. Duplin County social media accounts are not continuously monitored; therefore, any immediate questions or concerns should be submitted to the appropriate County department or representative.

Duplin County reserves the right to remove comments or submissions that contain vulgar language, material, threats, or offensive comments that target or disparage any individual or group on any basis, including but not limited to their race, color, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, pregnancy, physical or mental

disability, genetic information, age, gender identity, political affiliation, military and veterans status, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law.

Users have no right to be notified of any content removal. Repeat violators of this policy will be subject to being banned from all future posts. Without limitation, Duplin County expressly reserves the right to remove comments if they contain:

- *Profane language or content;*
- *Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination of any individual or group;*
- *Sexual harassment content;*
- *Solicitations of commerce or advertisements including promotion or endorsement;*
- *Promotion or endorsement of political issues, groups, or individuals;*
- *Promotion of particular services or products not affiliated with County services or products;*
- *Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;*
- *Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;*
- *Content intended to defame any person, group, or organization;*
- *Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as trademark or copyright infringement;*
- *Making or publishing of false, vicious, or malicious statements concerning any employee, the County or its operations;*
- *Violent or threatening content;*
- *Disclosure of confidential, sensitive, or proprietary information.*

Comments expressed on this page do not reflect the opinions and positions of Duplin County or its elected officials, employees, or volunteers. If you have any questions concerning the operation of this page, please contact us at pio@duplincountync.com.

Posting in an Official Capacity

Social media content providers posting to social media accounts on behalf of Duplin County will focus messaging on the County's broad interests, specific programmatic interests, and policy interests. County social media profiles will not contain any political information or be used for political activity. Social media content providers are prohibited from exchanging any form of material that is:

- Prohibited by the County Code of Ethics, federal, state or local law; or County policies, specifically including this policy, Human Resources policies, and Information Technology policies;
- Threatening, obscene, vulgar, offensive, abusive, derogatory, discriminatory, disparaging, defamatory, harassing;
- Involving sales or solicitation or facilitates any for-profit non-County business activity, including the sale of personal goods and services or any charitable fundraising campaigns that are not sanctioned by the County;
- Used for any political advocacy efforts or any non-County activity that could potentially cause the County to incur any liability.

Sharing or posting content owned by others or copyrighted shall be performed according to copyright, fair use, and established laws pertaining to materials owned by others. This includes, but is not limited to, quotes, images, documents, links, etc.

Departments may not allow external vendors to post on their behalf to official Duplin County social media accounts. Usernames and passwords may not be shared with external vendors for any reason. External vendors, or agents of external vendors, may not manage or administer any department social media account.

Social media content provider conduct will be consistent with Duplin County's values and professional standards. Failure to abide by this policy may result in loss of privileges related to social media access and use and possible disciplinary action. Social media content providers will:

- Use all reasonable efforts to keep social media interactions factual and accurate, providing only verifiable facts;
- Strive for transparency and openness and never seek to use information for personal gain;
- Provide links to credible sources of information when possible to support interactions;
- Wherever possible, links should direct users back to Duplin County's official website, or other applicable state or federal governmental website, for more information, forms, documents, or online services;
- Publicly correct any information communicated that is later found to be in error;
- Be honest about relationships, opinions, and identity;
- Protect privacy and not share confidential or non-public information;
- Respect the public's opinion, whether positive or negative, provided it is topical and not offensive, denigrating, or entirely out of context.

The County reserves the right, but is not obligated, to delete unacceptable submissions or parts thereof. The following are examples of unacceptable social networking content and comments. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive:

- Profane, vulgar or obscene language or content;
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on any basis, including but not limited to race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
- Solicitations of commerce;
- Infringement on copyrights or trademarks;
- Confidential or non-public information;
- Advocates violence or illegal activity;
- Copyrighted or trademarked material.

Posting to Personal Accounts Regarding County Topics

Employees may share to their personal social media accounts any statuses regarding Duplin County topics, provided that it does not interfere with an employee's regular work duties. Use of any social media from Duplin County's systems is subject to monitoring.

Employees may not attribute personal statements, opinions, or beliefs to Duplin County when engaged in personal social media use. If an employee expresses his or her beliefs and/or opinions on any form of personal social media, the employee may not, expressly or implicitly, represent themselves as an employee or representative of Duplin County. Employees assume any and all risks associated with the use of social media. Employees should consult the Duplin County Human Resources Department when uncertain of what should and should not be posted.

Employees should recognize the following: When posting to a public site, with broad, public access, the employee has a reasonable expectation that the post is public, and therefore, subject to review by Duplin County. No matter the origin of the social media site or the privacy settings, all information posted on the internet should be done with the expectation of no real privacy.

Employee Personal Accounts

Duplin County respects its employees' First Amendment rights and their right to interact on social media accounts. The County reserves the right to monitor any employee's public social media sites for information related to Duplin County business.

Any employee who posts a status, comments on another post or comment, or makes any comment towards the County, any of its departments, staff, vendors, contractors, or associates, that includes profane, vulgar or obscene language or content, or content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on any basis, including but not limited to race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, or puts the County at risk due to its content, will be subject to reprimand and disciplinary action in accordance with the Duplin County Employee Personnel Policies.

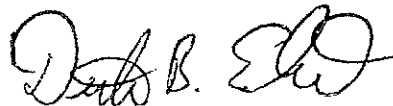
Social Media at Work

Employees should refrain from using social media during work hours and/or while using equipment provided by Duplin County unless the activity is work-related in accordance with this Policy. Employees may use personal devices to access social media sites during authorized breaks. However, Duplin County email addresses may not be used to register on any social network, blog, or other online activity for personal use.

Retaliation Prohibited

Duplin County expressly prohibits negative action being taken against an employee who reports a potential violation of this Policy or who cooperates in an investigation related to this Policy. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible violation or otherwise participating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with the Duplin County Employee Personnel Policies.

Adopted the 1st day of February, 2021.



Dexter Edwards, Chairman
Duplin County Board of Commissioners



Attest: _____

Davis H. Brinson
Clerk to the Board