

Policy on Internet and Social Media Usage

Application

This policy applies to all Virginia Department of Health (VDH) employees who are full time or part time, and other VDH engaged workers, interns, temporary workers, volunteers, consultants, contractors or other entities that have been contracted or authorized to perform work on behalf of VDH.

Policy

This policy establishes Internet usage parameters for all Agency personnel during work hours and after work hours. Additionally, this policy defines rules for Agency personnel utilizing social media tools. This includes social media activities which can have an influence on the workplace or mentions the agency.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide definitive direction to the VDH community to ensure that all Internet usage during work hours is consistent with VDH confidentiality standards, ethical standards, and the Agency's mission. This policy provides direction for the use of personal social media tools to ensure that usage promotes best practices and conformity while promoting accessibility, respect, and excellence throughout the Agency. This policy applies additional standards to what is already outlined in DHRM Policy 1.75 Use of Electronic Communications and VDH Policy 1.08 on Agency Sponsored Social Media Postings.

Related Policies & Resources

DHRM Policy 1.75 Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media
OCOM Policy 1.01 VDH Confidentiality Policy
OCOM Policy 1.03 VDH Code of Ethics
OCOM Policy 1.08 VDH Agency Sponsored Social Media Postings
OHR Policy 2.30 Prohibition of Workplace Harassment
VDH Branding Guide 2013 Office of Risk Communications
VDH Social Media Guidance 2014

Employee Responsibilities and Requirements

Compliance with all VDH policies

Social media activities by VDH personnel whether at work or on work issued computers, is subject to all existing Agency policies, Confidentiality (OCOM Policy 1.01), Code of Ethics (OCOM Policy 1.03), and Workplace Harassment (OHR Policy 2.30).

Personal Usage

Personal Internet usage shall be limited to breaks and lunch times whether on state provided or personal electronic equipment. All personnel must ensure that use of the Internet does not interfere with work commitments. No personal laptops or other devices can be plugged into the VDH network without prior approval from the supervisor and the agency security officer.

Policy on Internet and Social Media Usage

Protection of Confidential or Proprietary information

Confidential or proprietary information about VDH is not to be shared under any circumstances, including during personal Internet usage. This includes patient information and any other items listed in the OCOM 1.01 VDH Confidentiality Policy.

VDH Representation

Full disclosure regarding employment at VDH is required should any communications about VDH be relayed on personal postings on the external Internet. Personnel should identify themselves as a VDH employee. Failing to do so could be misleading to readers or viewers. VDH personnel shall make it clear on all personal postings that their opinions are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Agency. Personnel should use a disclaimer which states: "This content does not reflect the opinion, position or endorsement from the Virginia Department of Health."

The Agency logo, the Seal of the Commonwealth, or VDH program logos may not be used on any personal Internet or social media activity. Official VDH email addresses may not be used on any personal Internet or social media sites. Personnel shall not post photos or videos of themselves in VDH identifying items (i.e. hats, shirts, etc. which display the VDH logo) or in VDH uniforms. In the event another individual posts a photo or video of VDH personnel in VDH identifying items, the VDH personnel should "untag" themselves if possible.

VDH does not endorse people, products, services and organizations. All postings must comply with copyright and fair use laws.

Respect and Professionalism

All personnel shall be respectful of VDH's products and services when utilizing social media. Any posts, blogs, comments, etc. that reference VDH, shall be consistent with the Agency's high standards of professional conduct. All postings should be professional, respectful, use good judgment and be accurate and honest. Unprofessional language or behavior reflects poorly on VDH and may result in a liability risk for the individual or the Agency. It could also result in a Standards of Conduct process for the individual.

VDH strongly discourages "friending" of patients or clients on social media websites (Facebook, etc.). Staff in patient care or client services roles should not initiate or accept friend requests except in unusual circumstances such as the situation where an in-person friendship pre-dates the treatment relationship.

VDH discourages staff in management/supervisory roles from initiating "friend" requests with employees they manage. Managers/supervisors may accept friend requests if initiated by the employee, and if the manager/supervisor does not believe it will negatively impact the working relationship.

Policy on Internet and Social Media Usage

Respect Intellectual property Rights/Copyrights

Personnel must recognize and respect intellectual property rights, including copyrights. Whenever using third-party materials get the owner's permission, make sure to credit the owner and if possible link to the original source.

Use Discretion

VDH would like employees to keep in mind that search engines and other technologies make it virtually impossible to take something back. Be sure you mean what you say. Before you hit "send" or "post" please pause and reread. If you wouldn't want that particular thought or contribution forever associated with your name, don't post it.

Procedures

In addition to guidance set forth in the VDH OCOM Policy 1.08 Agency Sponsored Social Media Postings, all Social Media sites, which are created on behalf of the work unit, must be approved in advance by the Office or District Director and the Chief Information Officer. Once created, all content must be approved in advance by the Office or District Director and shared with the Office of Risk Communication and Education. The sites should follow the VDH Branding Guidance 2014. For further information regarding social media sites created on behalf of a work unit please see OIM's social media policy, (VDH OCOM Policy 1.08 Agency Sponsored Social Media Postings).

For any personal Internet and social media activities that have content related to VDH activities, the following disclaimer should be posted: "This content does not reflect the opinion, position or endorsement from the Virginia Department of Health."

Office and Health Directors are expected to enforce this policy and investigate any Internet or social media activities that do not comply with this policy or the related policies. Employees should expect compliance monitoring and have no expectation of privacy in publicly shared material.

Policy Administration

This policy shall not be interpreted or enforced in a manner that would infringe any constitutionally-protected right of the employee (or any other individuals this policy applies too), including the employee's rights to freedom of speech and freedom of association under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Speech is usually protected when the employee is speaking generally about a matter of public importance or concern; communications that violate this policy and that relate solely to private internal personnel matters, or which are unduly disruptive of the work of the Agency, generally are not protected. This policy shall not be interpreted or enforced in a manner that would prohibit activities protected by Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act.

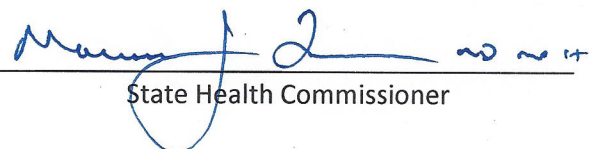
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Glossary

Personnel - Employees who are full time or part time, and other VDH engaged workers, interns, temporary workers, volunteers, consultants, contractors or other entities that have been contracted or authorized to perform work on behalf of VDH.

Reviewer: 
Deputy Commissioner for Administration

Date: 6/2/14

Approver: 
State Health Commissioner

Date: 6/16/14

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