

American Hospital Association Social Media Policy

PURPOSE

These guidelines describe how the American Hospital Association (AHA) makes use of social media. For the purpose of this document, the term “social media” shall refer to a website or platform that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest Twitter, and YouTube.

The AHA’s mission is to advance the health of individuals and communities. The AHA leads, represents and serves hospitals, health systems and other related organizations that are accountable to the community and committed to health improvement.

Therefore, the AHA uses social media to build relationships with the health care field, the media, and the public as part of our efforts to fulfill that mission. Our use of social media enables the AHA to dialogue with and educate our various audiences about health care issues and trends as they affect hospitals and health systems, and to ensure that the perspectives and needs of the health care field are clearly articulated and understood. It is with these purposes in mind that the AHA has adopted these guidelines for social media use.

AHA’s guidelines for social media use will continually evolve as association needs for, uses of and experience with social media evolves and as social media itself evolves.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION IS CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS

The AHA’s use of social media is closely tied to its mission of advocacy on behalf of the health care field and, consequently, it is critical that the AHA’s use of social media properly reflect the association’s public policy views and positions. Therefore, the AHA’s use of social media shall be under the general direction of the senior vice president for communications. The director of media relations will be the sole responsible party for using social media on behalf of the association, but also may for a general or for a specific purpose or time period specifically designate, appoint, authorize and/or otherwise approve, as appropriate, other AHA staff to serve as the official social media voice of the association. Such action by the director of media relations also may include, as appropriate, sanctioning the use of social media by individual departments, divisions and/or subsidiaries of the AHA to the extent that the communication by the department, division and/or subsidiary is not inconsistent with the association’s public policy views and positions. Before an employee starts a social media initiative or project, he or she must submit the proposal to the director of media relations.

Notwithstanding the special role of director of media relations outlined above, all AHA staff have a role in ensuring that social media is used responsibly on behalf of the association. All staff are encouraged to call to the attention of the director of media relations and/or responsible AHA authorities any issues, concerns or problems that might interfere with the association’s responsible use of social media. Bringing the issue to the attention of the association

immediately will enable AHA to work toward an appropriate and timely resolution of the issue, concern or problem.

The AHA's use of social media reflects our official positions and views on public policy issues directly affecting our members. Consequently, the association wants to make it as easy as possible for others to be able to distinguish AHA-endorsed and/or adopted official positions disclosed through social media from any personal positions and views of individual employees. We also don't want to burden employees or in any way "chill" their rights to freely express themselves whether it is the right to free speech under the First Amendment, rights under federal labor laws like the National Labor Relations Act or any other applicable legal right. Therefore, to guarantee full exercise of employees' rights while simultaneously ensuring that others can distinguish official association social media disclosures from an employee's personal ones, we expect that only those authorized to speak on behalf of the AHA in an official capacity do so via social media channels without including a disclaimer. We also expect that all employees will continue to comply with other posted AHA policies.

Employees who are not authorized to speak on behalf of the AHA in an official capacity may share their opinions or thoughts about our company and company-related topics via social media channels as long as they include some appropriate disclaimer clearly acknowledging that their personal opinions do not reflect the policies, views and/or opinions of the association itself. In addition, employees who identify themselves as an AHA employee on a social media platform should include a disclaimer. Such disclaimers do not necessarily need to be included directly in the particular social media disclosure itself. However, disclaimers should be stated prominently and clearly once – preferably in the biography or about field – on the profile page of the social media account holder. Examples of appropriate social media disclaimers include:

- I work for AHA [or particular work unit, department, division of the AHA], but the opinions [or views] expressed here are solely my personal opinions [or views].
- I am not speaking as the official spokesperson of the AHA but my personal opinion is . . .

SOCIAL MEDIA IS ABOUT DIALOGUE WITH MEMBERS, MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

The AHA uses social media to create a dialogue about issues that affect the health care field and the association welcomes as part of that dialogue anyone with any interest in issues affecting the health care field. However, we reserve the right to take appropriate actions against dialogue participants who fail to observe our guidelines respecting the proper use of our social media sites as outlined below.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS ABOUT CIVIL DISCOURSE

- AHA accepts responsibility for the content it posts on its social media sites and will not impersonate, mislead or purposely obscure the association's identity when using social media. Social media is about enhancing the association's credibility and reputation. The AHA also expects participants in dialogue on our social media sites to refrain from impersonating, misleading or purposely obscuring their identities.

- AHA protects its own intellectual property and respects the intellectual property of others. We will not intentionally use copyrighted material without permission or use others' company or business name, logo or other trademark-protected materials in a manner that may mislead or confuse others with regard to the company's brand or business affiliation. The AHA also expects that participants in dialogue on our social media sites to display the same respect for the intellectual property of the AHA and others. We will respond to clear and complete notices of alleged copyright or trademark infringement.
- AHA recognizes the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of an individual's personal and medical data and we will not include, reference or reveal such personal data in dialogue on our social media sites. We expect participants in the dialogue on our social media sites to similarly respect confidentiality and to refrain from including, referring to or revealing individuals' personal or medical data.
- AHA accepts differences and differing opinions about health care issues affecting the hospital field and we strive to maintain a courteous, polite and professional dialogue about these issues even when we might disagree with opinions expressed by others. The AHA expects that participants in dialogue on the association's social media sites also will accept differences and differing opinions by responding in a respectful way when they disagree or have a difference of opinion.
- AHA does not use social media to bully, intimidate or threaten others and we expect participants in dialogues on the association's social media sites to refrain from bullying, intimidation and threatening harm or violence to anyone, including threats directed to the association or any of its staff.
- AHA does not use social media to defame the reputation of others and we will not tolerate the use of the association's social media sites by any dialogue participants in order to defame the reputation of the association, any individuals or groups of individuals, or any organization or business entity.
- AHA does not publish or post profanity or obscene or pornographic communication on its social media sites. We do not tolerate the use of profanity or posting obscene or pornographic images by any participants in the dialogue on the association's social media sites, whether in a user profile or background or in a response, comment, or message posting or response.
- AHA intends that social media serve as an effective communications tool for the association and will refrain from spamming and other abusive uses of the social media technology/capability. We expect that participants in dialogue on the association's social media sites will properly use the technology/capabilities as an effective communications tool and will not engage in spam or other misuse of communications technologies/capabilities.

AHA WILL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO CURB UNCIVIL SOCIAL MEDIA DIALOGUE

AHA does not tolerate social media dialogue that does not conform to reasonable standards of civility outlined above. AHA, therefore, will take appropriate steps to ensure that dialogue on the association's social media sites conform to such behavioral standards. Such steps may include blocking any user and ending any communication with the blocked user or involving proper law enforcement authorities, including when the association feels that an actual violent threats have been made.