

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
FOR BENTON AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES**

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FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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MEMO TO: Superior Court Staff
FROM: Pat Austin, Court Administrator 
DATE: September 11, 2017
RE: Superior Court Social Media Policy

The Court has recently adopted a Social Media Policy. Please review the Policy and if you have questions, please feel free to contact me. I am not aware of any Superior Court Social Media Accounts being used by employees of the Superior Court Adult Division.

Thank you,

Pat

C: Judge Ekstrom



Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court

Social Media Policy & Procedure

2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Policy	1
1. Purpose	1
2. Definitions	1
3. Applicability	2
4. Acceptable Use	2
Personal Use	2
Professional Use	2
Personal Responsibility	3
Identify Yourself Clearly	3
5. Content Management, Oversight, and Enforcement	3
6. Amendment & Implementation of Policy	4
Procedure for New Account Creation	4
7. New Social Media Accounts	4

POLICY

Policy

1. PURPOSE

The Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court recognizes that technology, particularly in the area of computer and internet applications, is advancing at a phenomenal pace, making it difficult for any written policy to develop at the same rate of emerging trends and capabilities. The Court recognizes that such technology should be made available to its employees and is helpful when communicating with the public. The Court recognizes that the nature and content of the message itself should be used to determine its appropriateness and applicability to social media use.

This document defines the Social Media Policy (the "Policy") for the Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court, Washington (the "Court"). To address the fast-changing landscape of the internet and the way residents of Benton and Franklin Counties communicate and obtain information online. The Court encourages the use of social media to further the goals and mission of the Court where appropriate. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media on behalf of the Court and the retention of public records created as a result of such use.

2. DEFINITIONS

Authorized Agent: A Court employee or third party who has been authorized by the Superior Court Administrator, Juvenile Court Administrator or judicial officer to Post Content on behalf of a Court on social media accounts.

Comments: A response often provided as an answer or reaction to a Post or previous Comments on a Social Network.

Content: All text, images, videos, website hyperlinks, and any other information published, Posted, and/or distributed through Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court social media accounts by the public. This includes but is not limited to: micro-blogs, status updates, direct messages, and tweets.

Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court: Employees of Superior and Juvenile Courts.

Official Court Social Media Account: Any form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and other Content. This includes: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and more is created using an official County email address.

Official Court Business: Any communications related to the functions, operations, or messages of the Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court.

POLICY

Page/Account Administrator: Any individual who has access to editing, creating, or deleting Content on any Official Court Social Media Account. Account Administrators can add or remove other individuals from Page editing.

Page/Account Editor: Account Editors are present on Facebook, and are similar to administrators, but cannot add or remove individuals from Page editing.

Post – The Court’s addition of information, photos, video, and other Content to any Official Court Social Media Account Page.

Page – A particular portion of a social media website where user added content is displayed.

Social Network – A dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by Posting information, Comments, messages, images, videos, etc.

3. APPLICABILITY

These guidelines are applicable to all of the Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court.

4. ACCEPTABLE USE

All use of Official Court Social Media Accounts by Court employees shall be consistent with applicable state, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including but not limited to:

- First Amendment rights;
- Terms of Service applicable to individual social media accounts;
- Applicable records retention schedules or policies; and
- This Policy.

Personal Use

While nothing prohibits Court employees from having personal social media accounts, such accounts must remain personal in nature and shall not be tied to County email addresses or passwords. This principle helps to ensure a distinction between sharing personal and Court views.

Professional Use

All Official Court Social Media Accounts shall remain professional in nature and be conducted in accordance with the Court’s policies, practices, and expectations. Employees shall not use Official Court Social Media Accounts for personal use, political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities.

POLICY

Court employees or contractors may not Post any of the following information on official Court Social Media Accounts:

- Confidential information;
- Violations of copyright, intellectual property or privacy rights;
- Profanity, racist, sexist, or derogatory Content or Comments;
- Partisan political views; and
- Commercial endorsements or spam.

Inappropriate usage of Official Court Social Media Accounts may be grounds for disciplinary action pursuant to applicable Court policies including applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements. Only persons authorized by the Court may publish Content on Official Court Social Media Accounts.

Personal Responsibility

It is integral that each individual be thoughtful about how he/she presents him/herself in online Social Networks, where there are often blurred lines between what is public, private, personal, and professional. The following policy will assist Court employees in appropriately presenting him/herself and the Court online:

- Confidentiality: Employees shall not Post or release to the public through an Official Court Social Media Account any information or documentation the release of which would be prohibited by: a) federal, state, local law or policy...

Identify Yourself Clearly

Posting or responding to third party Content on Official Court Social Media Accounts may necessitate providing individual identification, such that Court employees should use their full name. However, using your actual name can come with risks, including not assuming privacy. Only Post information that you are comfortable disclosing to the public.

5. CONTENT MANAGEMENT, OVERSIGHT, AND ENFORCEMENT

Employees representing the Court through Official Court Social Media Accounts must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Failure to do so is grounds for revoking the privilege to participate in Official Court Social Media Accounts. Information must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity, and accuracy, and should avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms.

Court employees should recognize that the Content and messages they Post on Official Court Social Media Accounts are public and may be cited, rightfully or wrongfully, as official Court statements. Social media should not be used in place of other Court communication channels, including news media policy requirements or newspaper publication.

POLICY

All Official Court Social Media Accounts must set the Facebook profanity filter to “strong,” or the highest possible degree available. This profanity filter will allow Facebook to determine what to block by using the most commonly reported words and phrases marked offensive by the Facebook community, without the Account Administrator needing to remove content.

6. AMENDMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

The Court reserves the right to amend this Policy. All existing employees subject to this Policy shall be advised of their rights and responsibilities under the current policy, upon its implementation. If this Policy is changed, they will be notified of any changes to those rights and responsibilities. All employees hired after implementation of this Policy shall be advised of this policy at the time of hiring or orientation.

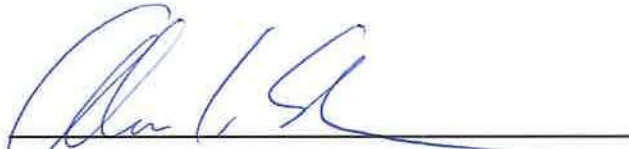
PROCEDURE FOR NEW ACCOUNT CREATION

7. NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

All Court employees must fill out an Authorization for Remote Access form, attached hereto, signed by their court administrator. This will be reviewed with Benton County's CPPR Coordinator prior to creating a new social media account for Official Court Business.

The Superior or Juvenile Court Administrator or designee will communicate with the Benton County CPPR Coordinator to set up the new accounts upon approval by the Court. The Court-approved authorized employee will be added as an Account Administrator once the account is created.

This Social Media Policy is hereby approved and accepted by the undersigned Judges of the Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court.


Judge Alexander C. Ekstrom, Presiding Judge

08/28/2017
Dated


Judge Bruce A. Spinner, Asst. Presiding Judge

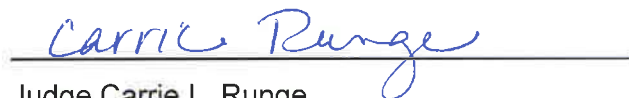
8/28/17
Dated


Judge Joseph M. Burrowes

8/28/17
Dated


Judge Cameron Mitchell

8.28.17
Dated


Judge Carrie L. Runge

8/28/17
Dated


Judge Jacqueline J. Shea-Brown

8/28/2017
Dated


Judge Vic L. VanderSchoor

8/31/17
Dated

Approved: 8/17/2017