



Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Social Media Policy Guide

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Introduction

Participation in online social media networks offers many opportunities for the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to expand and enhance our communication with clients, volunteers, stakeholders and the general public. It complements our traditional communication channels (website presence, news releases, roadshows, public meetings, etc.) by enabling more rapid information sharing, which in turn allows us to more effectively obtain input and feedback from our audiences.

The social media tools we use and the way we use them should work to accomplish the Division's overall goals, especially relating to the third pillar of the *Blueprint for Change* – Constituent Engagement. Likewise, the principles behind our social media presence should reflect the Division's overall guiding principles.

As the Division of Family and Children Services we....

1. Demonstrate our commitment to the safety of our children in the decisions we make and the actions we take.
2. Empower, strengthen and support families on their path toward independence.
3. Serve with compassion.
4. Provide caring, responsive and effective service.
5. Engage, listen and respond to our constituents, communities and each other.
6. Collaborate with our communities to create systems of support.
7. Develop a competent, professional and efficient workforce that never stops learning and growing.

This Social Media Policy Guide contains recommendations for both official and non-official/personal use of social media channels by DFCS employees.

Employee Policy Guidelines

The following guidelines apply for official and non-official/personal use of social media:

- Employees must adhere to the Division's Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook and other company policies when using social media on behalf of the Division.
- Employees should be aware that anything they post may be public information indefinitely and may affect their personal image or the Division's.
- Employees should be aware that any work-related information connected to a personal social media account is subject to an open records request.
- Employees are expected to adhere to the Division's privacy laws and standards of professional and ethical behavior in any online activity.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include: posting content or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing or libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- Employees are not to publish, post or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with the Office of Human Resources and/or their supervisor.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online platforms may generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees must refer these inquiries to authorized DFCS Office of Communications spokespersons or the Office of General Counsel.
- If employees encounter a situation on social media that threatens to become antagonistic, they should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of a supervisor.
- Employees should get appropriate permission before referring to or posting images of current or former employees, children, vendors or other partners. Please use the photo release form on page 12 and keep a copy on file.
- Social media shouldn't interfere with an employee's responsibilities at DFCS.
- If an employee publishes content that has not been endorsed by DFCS, it is recommended that they include a disclaimer stating, "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent DFCS's positions, strategies or opinions."
- Participation in activities or groups that may damage the reputation of DFCS and its services must be avoided. Please be cognizant of your online associations.
- No insulting or offensive comments should be published by an employee on the internet in regards to DFCS. If you have complaints, please discuss them with the Office of Human Resources.
- Finally, please use discretion. If you have any doubts about posting or sharing something, you probably shouldn't post it.

Note: Employees may face disciplinary action should they violate the above policies.

What is social media?

“Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people, companies and other organizations to create, share, or exchange information, career interests, ideas and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.” -Wikipedia

Glossary of Social Media Terms

- **Blog:** a web-based forum with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other materials where the blog host posts material on the website and others may provide comments.
- **Cover Photo:** the large, horizontal image at the top of your Facebook profile or page. Similar to a profile photo, a cover photo is public and can be seen by anyone. This is a place for organizations to use a unique image to represent them. *Please use whatever cover photo is being used on the main DFCS Facebook page.
- **Direct Message:** a direct message (DM) or private message can be sent to one of your followers on Twitter or Facebook. This allows private information to be shared, not in a public forum. Many times when customers need assistance, we ask that they DM us their contact information.
- **Facebook Reach:** this is the number of people who have seen content from your Facebook page. Reach is not the same as impressions (the total number of times your content is viewed).
- **Facebook Reactions:** this feature allows users to react to posts beyond “like”. Reactions include: “love,” “haha,” “wow,” “sad” and “angry.” These reactions will factor into your Facebook analytics.
- **Hashtag:** the hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the “#” symbol. #Hashtags are a simple way to mark the topic(s) of a social media post and make them discoverable to others with shared interests. On most social networks, clicking a hashtag will reveal all the public and recently published messages that also contain that hashtag.
- **Podcast:** a way of publishing audio files on the web so they can be downloaded onto computers, tablets or other devices. Podcasting allows users to subscribe to a feed of new audio files.
- **RSS (Rich Site Summary) Feed:** a web format that alerts users to new content on a website. This allows users to avoid the conventional methods of browsing or searching for information on websites. Once users subscribe to an RSS feed, they can gather material from websites of their choosing faster and more efficiently.
- **Scheduling:** a tool to plan social media posts and content ahead of time. Scheduling on Facebook allows the social media coordinator to draft several messages and schedule the specific date and time he/she would like each message to post.
- **Share:** when content is reposted on a social media site by another user.
- **Social Customer Service:** the practice of resolving customer service issues by way of social media. When customer service issues arise, it is imperative that they be resolved timely.
- **Video Sharing:** websites (i.e., YouTube) where users post video they have taken for others to view and comment on. Such sites allow viewers to “embed” or share videos through hyperlinks.

DFCS Social Media Outlets



Twitter is a microblogging service for publishing short messages (up to 140 characters). It is used to communicate with constituents who may have brief questions, and to share about events happening within the Division.

Find us: @GADFCS or www.twitter.com/gadfcs



Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Businesses and organizations use Facebook to connect with their respective audiences.

Find us: <https://www.facebook.com/GADFCS>



YouTube is a website designed for sharing videos. Once uploaded, videos can be made public and shared with anyone.

Find us: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcWclXWbEGiJ62OQyRCr82Q>

Account Management

The DFCS Office of Communications maintains all of the Division's main social media channels. The Office of Communications will assist with the creation of regional Facebook pages for regional Resource Development staff to use for the promotion of foster parent recruitment and retention. For more information on account management by Resource Development staff, please refer to the following:

- Employee Policy Guidelines (page 4)
- Examples of External Content (page 7)
- Managing Constituent Engagement through Social Media (page 8)
- Social Media Responses (pages 10-11)

Content Management

Those in charge of managing social media accounts are responsible for the content posted on the account, for sharing relevant information and for monitoring the account for constituent feedback or issues. Content needs to be published regularly to keep the audience engaged. In general, it is recommended to publish several times a day. Content, comments and responses should be managed by the social media coordinator designated by the Resource Development lead. To share information statewide, it is important to establish a process for informing the Office of Communications about events, news, emergencies, etc. To make a request for a post on the official DFCS social media sites, please submit all pictures and messages (max 500 words for Facebook and 140 characters for Twitter) to dhswebrequests@dhs.ga.gov.

Examples of External Content

1. Publication of new press releases by the Division
2. Broadcasting of live events
3. Publication of relevant, positive news stories relating to the work of the Division *
4. Publication of new photos and videos of events that the Division participates in
5. Sharing of specific campaigns (foster parent recruitment, National Adoption month, National Foster Care month, etc.)
6. Website updates or announcements
7. Invitation to events
8. Information on incidents, emergencies and critical situations
9. Publication of trainings being offered locally or statewide
10. Sharing of relevant statistics, etc. from a reputable government or non-profit source (i.e., Administration for Children and Families, Voices for Georgia's Children, other state agencies)

**Note: Please do not share any politically-focused news stories or information about potential legislation for the Division, especially during the legislative session. We strive to promote a neutral environment.*

Managing Constituent Engagement through Social Media

On any DFCS social media site, comments containing any of the following are not allowed and will be removed or hidden. It is recommended to respond to comments within 24 hours. Please use the Social Media Responses and guidance provided on page 10.

- Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures
- Profanity of any kind
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Solicitations of any sort
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Comments that name foster youth* and or a birth family
- Comments that provide personal information, such as a Social Security Number, a client ID number or other personally identifiable information.

**Note: Guidelines and policy regarding photos of foster children are provided on page 9.*

Here are a few things to remember:

- The Office of Communications is here to help at any time and can be reached at: [DFCS Office Of Communications@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS_Office_Of_Communications@dhs.ga.gov).
- The Office of Communications will view your Facebook page occasionally to ensure all of the pages representing the Division are clean and consistent.
- The guidelines in this Social Media Policy Guide should be displayed to **all** social media coordinators and made available by hyperlink to all DFCS employees.

Frequent Questions from Foster Parents & Kinship Caregivers

Can I post pictures of my child in care on social media? Children in foster care cannot be photographed for newspaper articles, Facebook or any other social media outlet, or a publication where their identities may be publicized. It is the policy of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) that foster parents/relative caregivers do not post any pictures of a foster child in their care online. It is important to never reveal personal information about your foster child on the internet as you risk jeopardizing his/her identity, safety and right to privacy.

Can I talk about my child in care to another parent (foster or other) who is seeking advice online? You can share advice, but discussing confidential information about your foster child is a violation of policy. When you need input from other parents, or vice versa, please only describe the situation in general terms. Discussing information beyond that is a breach of the child's confidentiality and could put him/her at risk.

How can I protect my child in care's privacy if I have to send an email to his teacher about his behavior, for example? Respecting the confidentiality of your foster child is vital. However, recent policy guidance regarding health and behavioral information has been addressed in the memo on page 13. It is important to communicate with your foster child's teacher(s) so they can address his/her immediate needs while still keeping their information confidential.

Why should I monitor my child in care's activities on the internet? While the internet is a great source of information and an integral part of your child's education and development, it also has many risks. As a parent, being aware of the dangers of the internet is necessary.

How do I help my child in care use the internet safely? Cable and mobile phone providers offer the option of setting up parental controls. With these, you are able to restrict the sites your child can browse. This will prohibit him/her from viewing inappropriate content. For additional information, please refer to the guidance provided on this tip sheet:
https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/smtips_parent.pdf.

What can I do at home to encourage positive behavior on the internet? It is recommended that you model positive behavior when using social media. Some examples include: browsing the internet with your child to teach him/her about what is and isn't appropriate; talking with your child about various websites, just as you would talk about TV shows, video games and movies that are/aren't allowed; establishing boundaries by designating a family computer, tablet or mobile phone with rules to follow and scheduled times for use; setting up computers in common areas where activity can be easily monitored.

How to support youth while promoting positive social media opportunities:

Today, allowing youth in foster care to use social media is important as it provides a sense of normalcy for them and allows them to grow relationships with their peers (most of whom use social media daily, too). It is important to model appropriate social media use – including etiquette, language and post content. Sharing this tip sheet with your youth https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/smtips_youth.pdf provides guidance on how they can stay safe while using social media.

Social Media Responses

If you receive any of the below inquiries on your regional Facebook page, please use the responses provided below. If clients pose a complaint or issue via comment, please respond and ask them to send their contact information in via a direct message and address their issue privately. With each scenario **[blue]**, guidance is provided (**bolded statements**) on how to respond to each situation.

- **[Report about possible child abuse or neglect]** Once received, please submit to the CPSIS as you would with any report. It is recommended that you copy/paste the message verbatim and include any photos, etc. that are attached to the message.
 - Hi *customer name*, your email was delivered successfully and will be routed to a Case Manager. However, please note that mandated reporters are encouraged to start using the secure web-based portal at <https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx> to make a CPS referral and track previous referrals. **If you are reporting a true emergency, please contact 911 first.** This auto-reply e-mail serves as confirmation of receipt of your report of alleged abuse/neglect. Please do not attempt to contact the CICC hotline to confirm receipt. Remember, the DFCS Child Protective Center can be reached at: 1-855-GACHILD / 1-855-422-4453.

- **[Inquiries about a specific case]** To ensure client privacy, it is recommended that you request only their name, contact information and client ID #. Once you have this information, a request can be sent for someone from Constituent Services to reach out directly to the client to address his/her needs. The social media coordinator merely serves as the communicator of information from client to services needed.
 - Hi *customer name*, please provide your full name, client ID, phone number and the county you live in, and someone will contact you within 24-48 hours.
 - --- **Once the above information is received, copy the Facebook message and email it to the DFCS Customer Service inbox. Respond to the customer with the message below.** ---
 - *Customer name*, your message has been forwarded to DFCS Customer Service. If you would like, you can contact DFCS directly at: customer_services_dfcs@dhs.ga.gov or 404-657-3433. DFCS Customer Service will respond directly to you. Thank you, GADFCS

- **[How do I apply for a job with DFCS?]**
 - Hello, our employment website is: <http://dhsjobs.dhs.ga.gov/Public/Home/Index> and all open positions are posted here regularly.

- **[I'm interested in becoming a Foster Parent. How do I begin the process?]** If you know of the specific Resource Development staffer in the interested person's county, it is recommended that you connect him/her directly to keep the process moving.
 - Check out the information available on the www.fostergeorgia.com website by selecting "Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent" or call 877-210-KIDS to get more information via the phone.

- **[Complaint around caseworker]**
 - *Customer name*, we're sorry you experienced this inconvenience. Please provide your full name, client ID #, phone number, name of your caseworker and the county you live in, and we will forward it to DFCS Customer Service. Please allow 24-48 hours for someone to contact you. Thank you, GADFCS

- **[I didn't get my food stamp deposit]** To ensure client privacy, it is recommended that you request only his/her name, contact information and client ID #. Once you have this information, a request can be sent for someone from Constituent Services to reach out directly to the client to address his/her needs. The social media coordinator merely serves as the communicator of information from client to services needed.
 - Hi *customer name*, we are sorry about this inconvenience. Please provide your full name, client ID #, phone number and the county you live in, and we will forward it to DFCS Customer Service. Please allow 24-48 hours for someone to contact you. In the meantime, you can call 404-657-3433 to speak with someone directly.

- **[I need more information on getting food stamps. Where do I go and how long will the process take?]**
 - Information on Georgia's SNAP Program can be found at <http://dhs.georgia.gov/sites/dhs.georgia.gov/files/47.pdf>, or you may contact the COMPASS Online Services hotline at 1-877-423-4746.

- **[Inquiries around Medical insurance needs]**
 - You'll find more information at the following website: <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/medicaid>, or you may contact the COMPASS Online Services hotline at: 1-877-423-4746.

- **[Who is my caseworker?]**
 - Please contact your local DFCS office <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/county-offices>.

Photo Release Form



STATE OF GEORGIA
Division of Family and Children Services

Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby D. Cagle
Director

Photo and Video Release Agreement

County: _____ **Project:** _____

1. I, the undersigned, consent and agree that still photographs, motion pictures, or television presentations in the form of either live or video tape may be made of myself, my child(ren) by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.
2. This release gives the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services the right to use the above-listed visual material in conjunction with the teaching, instruction, training, information and education of employees of the Division or the general public.
3. Further, I hereby release the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services and forever discharge any claim of any nature against them as long as the material is used in compliance with the above stated paragraph 2.
4. I grant this consent as (parent-guardian) a voluntary contribution in the interest of the said reasons listed in paragraph 2.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Photo description:** _____

Children (if photographed):

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Photographer/Producer or Witness: _____

Memo to Foster Parents and School Personnel



STATE OF GEORGIA
Division of Family and Children Services

Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby D. Cagle
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Child Welfare Staff, Foster Parents, School Personnel

FROM:  Bobby D. Cagle, Director

Date: July 22, 2016

RE: **Sharing Foster Child Information With Foster Parents and School Personnel**

This memo is intended to clarify and give direction regarding the Division's policy for sharing information with foster parents, school personnel and other persons who provide services or care for foster children.

Employees who work for the Division are required to comply with both the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Georgia's confidential laws regarding families being served by the Division. In short, staff are prohibited from sharing protected health information or any other identifying information about families who are working with our agency in child protective services and foster care cases in violation of state or federal law. However, state and federal law do not prevent the agency from sharing a foster child's health information or other information concerning a child in agency custody with foster parents and school personnel who are caring for, treating or supervising a foster child. We are the legal custodian of the child and have the discretion and the obligation to share pertinent health and behavioral information with foster parents and schools to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child.

It is my expectation that staff share information relevant to the care of the child fully with foster parents, school personnel and others providing services or care to foster children. Staff are not permitted to share protected health or other information as it relates to biological parents or other family members.

Furthermore, it is policy (10.1 Foster Care Services, Placement of a Child) and my expectation that foster parents receive the following at the time of placement of a child:

- Foster Child Information Sheet (attached)
- A copy of the most recent case plan
- A copy of the child's Medicaid card

Finally, if all information is not known at the time of placement or if the information changes as the case progresses, the case manager should provide the foster parent with updated information as soon as possible.

If you need further clarification or have questions regarding this instruction, please e-mail me at Chat_with_the_DFCS_Director@dhs.ga.gov.

Thanks so much for all you do to serve Georgia's families and children!



**GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES
FOSTER CHILD INFORMATION SHEET**

Name child likes to be called _____ Birthdate _____
Medical history (disorders, allergies, dental history) _____ Social Security Number _____

Psychological and social history or any behavioral concerns _____

School history (last school attended, achievement level, school adjustment) _____

Why child is in foster care _____

History of foster care (other families: where (City or part of town), and why child was moved) _____

Does child have special toy or object? _____ Is it in his possession now? _____

Sleep patterns and rituals _____

Food preferences and dislikes _____

Are pictures of natural family available? _____ Does child have them with him now? _____
Where is his natural family? _____

Who are the members of the child's family? _____

Are siblings in foster care? Where? _____

What are the plans for this child? _____

Religious preferences (if any) _____
Clothing preferences (colors and style) _____
Fears _____
Special skills or achievements _____