



Social Security Administration's Social Media Policy

September 2014

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Purpose: Why are we issuing this policy?

We are committed to using social media tools to enhance communication, stakeholder outreach, collaboration, and information exchange. Our use of social media supports our mission to “deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public,” our vision to “provide the highest standard of considerate and thoughtful service for generations to come,” and our strategic objective to “develop and increase the use of online service options.”

Specifically, our policy will:

- Educate our employees on the agency’s official social media accounts;
- Guide employees’ safe and effective use of social media for Social Security-related matters (programs, services, and policies); and
- Inform employees about their responsibilities as Federal employees using social media in a personal capacity.

Periodically, we will update our policies for using social media to support our core mission.

Audience

Our social media policy applies to all Social Security and Disability Determination Services employees and serves as guidance to employees on their use of social media.

Definition: What is social media?

Social media includes web-based tools that enable users to create, share, consume, and discuss information in virtual communities. Our [social media hub](#) lists the agency’s official social media communities and which components manage them.

Presence and Strategy: How are we using social media?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) uses external social media tools to communicate with the public. [Socialsecurity.gov](#) is just one of many online channels we use to reach our audience. Our [social media hub](#) includes a directory of social media communication channels that help us reach a broad audience and engage citizens.

Roles and Process: Who has the lead for managing social media?

The Office of Communications (OCOMM) develops and manages content of and responds to comments on the agency’s primary social media accounts. OCOMM collaborates with several other agency components on social media governance issues, including the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Systems, and the records management staff in the Office of Budget, Finance, Quality, and Management.

Upon request from other DC-level components, the Deputy Commissioner for Communications may approve the creation of new social media accounts. You can find a listing of all official social media accounts and the negotiated social media terms of service agreements at [our social media hub](#).

Creating content

We base our content on SSA priorities, products, and national campaigns. We also produce content requested by deputy-level components. OCOMM prepares all text, graphics, and videos posted on our social media sites.

Posting content

OCOMM chairs a Social Media Editorial Board (Board) with representatives from offices within OCOMM as well as regional representatives from the Office of Operations. The Board meets monthly to review and finalize suggested daily social media posts for the following month (e.g., in June the Board puts together daily posts for the month of July). The Deputy Commissioner for Communications, or designee, approves the calendar of posts.

OCOMM also accepts requests for posts outside of the calendar process, on a case-by-case basis. Any component may request posts for our official Facebook and Twitter sites. Please see [the social media posting request form](#) for information on how to submit suggested posts for consideration by the Social Media Editorial Board.

The Deputy Commissioner for Communications, or his designee, must approve all agency posts and content on the external social media platforms managed by Office of Communications staff.

OCOMM has a dedicated social media team that posts approved messages on official social media sites.

Monitoring and responding to comments

OCOMM's social media team regularly monitors and scans our social media to make sure it complies with official social media comment policy. Please see Appendix A for details on the agency's social media conduct and comment policy.

The social media team identifies questions and comments appropriate for official response and follow strict procedures for drafting proposed official responses and gaining approval from OCCOM's Deputy Commissioner, or designee, before posting them.

Note: When a user violates the Social Media Citizen Conduct and Commenting Policy (see Appendix A), the social media team will consider First Amendment protections on speech prior to removing the offending comment and may ban future posts by the offender. Banned users

will still like our page and be able to share content from our page to other places on Facebook, but they'll no longer be able to comment on our page posts.

Policy: What are the rules for employee use of our social media sites?

Our employee policy addresses two types of employee uses: official and personal.

Official use

- a. Purpose: to communicate SSA's official programmatic, service, and policy matters; increase the public's followership of our social media pages; and increase the use of our online services.
- b. Who:
 - i. Designated social media administrators or employees using social media on behalf of the agency on SSA's official social media pages. Usually these are employees who:
 1. are involved in technical administration of SSA's internal and external social media sites, as well as in creating, posting, monitoring, and responding to comments on SSA's social media pages; or
 2. need to access social media sites at work for other reasons, such as conducting research, participating in engagements with internal and external audiences, marketing and seeking subscriptions to SSA's social media pages, or for other approved, job-related reasons.
 - ii. Employees who have received access to social media to carry out specific official agency duties.
 - iii. Only employees authorized by the Deputy Commissioner for Communications, or designee, may post official information and responses to the public or otherwise represent SSA on official social media pages managed by Office of Communications staff. As noted above, we have a designated team dedicated to the task of posting official messages and responses to customer inquiries or comments that specifically address SSA or ask for an official SSA response. Other DC-level components may request authorization from the Deputy Commissioner for Communications to establish official external social media pages or accounts through a business case justification. If authorization is granted, Office of Communications staff will provide guidance on how to establish and manage the presence.

Personal use

- a. Purpose: to establish and maintain social media networks in a personal capacity, *unrelated* to employees' work at SSA.
- b. Who: all SSA employees who maintain personal social media accounts, outside of their employment at the agency.
- c. While this policy primarily covers the use of our agency social media sites, you should keep in mind issues regarding your personal use of social media outside the bounds of your employment at SSA. There is an expectation that as an SSA employee you have a duty at all times to reflect well on the agency and the Federal government by acting in a positive and responsible manner in your online activities. (Refer to [Annual Personnel Reminders, 1.6, "Conduct On and Off the Job"](#)).
- d. You should observe the following policy to ensure you keep appropriate distinctions between your official and personal status in your social media activities:
 - i. Unless you are authorized by the Deputy Commissioner for Communications or designee, you may not establish social media pages or accounts where you present yourself as a representative of SSA or imply in any way that you speak on behalf of the agency.
 - ii. You must consider the implications of identifying yourself online as an SSA employee and avoid any activities that could reasonably create the perception that you have communicated in an official capacity as a Federal government employee. Remember that by identifying yourself as a Social Security employee, members of the public may perceive that you are speaking on behalf of the agency.
 - iii. Unless the Deputy Commissioner for Communications or designee has authorized you to provide an official agency response via social media, you must not take it upon yourself to respond to questions or comments on the agency social media sites.
 - iv. You must not contact members of the public directly (via Facebook Instant Message, Facebook Inbox message, Twitter response, and other forms of private messaging) in regards to a question or comment they made on our agency social media sites, even in an attempt to help, as these channels are not secure.
 - v. If you state in your social media account profile or in any other way indicate that you are an SSA employee and you refer to SSA's programs, services, or policies, you must include a disclaimer in your profile. You should also use a disclaimer, if possible, in each social media post where you refer to SSA's programs, services, or policies. You should use language like the following for the disclaimer:

“Any views I express here are my own and do not reflect the views, policies, or position of the Social Security Administration.”

- vi. You should not use your SSA email address while participating in personal social media activities.
- vii. Remember that the Standards of Conduct , including those on fundraising; the Hatch Act statutes on political activities; the Agency’s Limited Use Policy, and the rules for personally-owned electronic devices in the workspace apply to the personal use of social media.

Prohibited content

Never post the following information on any traditional formats (e.g., newspaper, TV, radio), digital formats or social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs):

- a. Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of claimants, applicants or beneficiaries -- PII is any information about an individual that is maintained by SSA and used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual. Some examples of PII follow:
 - i. Name
 - ii. Social Security Number
 - iii. Date and Place of Birth
 - iv. Mother’s Maiden Name
 - v. Biometric Records
 - vi. Information Linked to an Individual
 - vii. Medical Information
 - viii. Educational Information
 - ix. Financial Information
 - x. Employment Information
- b. Federal Tax Information (FTI) -- data that is received by SSA from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and earnings data that SSA processes on behalf of the IRS
- c. Policies or instructions labeled “Sensitive – Not to be shared with the public” --items with this label could possess detailed information about our processes that could negatively affect the agency if made public or other policies not approved for posting or public release
- d. Agency seal
- e. Beneficiary case information
- f. Contract and vendor information
- g. Pre-decisional documents (e.g., draft policies and regulations)
- h. Any other information obtained or accessed in performance of your official job duties that has not been approved for posting or public release

Authorities and References

Employees who use social media tools must follow applicable laws, regulations, policies, and personnel rules, including, but not limited to:

- Social Security official [Standards of Conduct](#),:
 - Annual Personnel Reminders
 - Policy on Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment
- [Cybersecurity Bulletins](#) and other appropriate information security rules and provisions; and
- Hatch Act, in particular, the policy on [Political Activity on Social Media Sites](#).

Contact for Policy Questions

Direct questions regarding the content of this issuance to Social.Media.Policy@ssa.gov in the Office of Communications Planning and Technology.

APPENDIX A: Social Security Administration’s Social Media Citizen Conduct and Commenting Policy

This policy presents the rules for acceptable conduct of the public on Social Security Administration’s (SSA) official social media pages. In cases where a user violates the comment policy, we may delete the offending comment and may ban future posts by the user. Banned users are still able to view SSA posts, but may not post any comments.

Our policy is set forth in the following message, which we have posted on our official Facebook page and plan to post in the future on other social media pages:

To our fans: Thank you for your support and for joining our community here on Facebook.

We hope you’ll find Social Security’s official fan page to be a useful source of news, updates, and information about Social Security programs. It is a limited public forum for that purpose. We know it also will become a key place for you to connect and be a part of the online community. But we also want you to be cognizant that it is the OFFICIAL fan page for the Social Security Administration. This is not the place for personal attacks, spam, or rants. Per our comments policy, we may delete comments if they include any of the following:

- *Personally Identifiable Information [PII] (e.g., Social Security numbers, postal and email addresses, phone numbers);*
- *Threatening, defamatory, or obscene language or material;*
- *Personal attacks (e.g., abusive remarks);*
- *Discriminatory language (including hate speech) about race, color, national origin, age, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, disability, or other legally or agency-protected group;*
- *Embedded media, such as videos or photos (but hyperlinks to such media are acceptable);*
- *Linking to unrelated content;*
- *Spam or undecipherable language (gratuitous links will be viewed as spam); and,*
- *Our employees’ names. While we love to hear good things, we want to respect our employees’ privacy as well, so please do not post their names.*

Please participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments. The Social Security Administration does not endorse any external posts or links that appear on this site.

We do not guarantee or warrant that the information posted by anyone other than the Social Security Administration on this site is correct, and disclaim any liability for any loss or damage resulting from reliance on any such information. Our official agency responses will include the SSA seal.

We ask that you submit inquiries/comments related to specific benefit situations through normal SSA channels (see [Contact Social Security](#)). On Facebook, a non-secure site, we do not have access to personal information and are not able to answer specific questions about a claim. Inquiries will not be associated with an individual’s benefit claim, nor will they protect benefit filing dates or rights. While social media is a 24/7 medium, our monitoring capabilities are not. We do our best to respond timely to comments and questions, but we only respond during business hours. Keep commenting, and thanks for joining the conversation.

[Social Security’s Internet Privacy Policy link](#)