

Information Technology and Social Media Policy Guidelines and Considerations for Agencies

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide county and private agencies general guidelines and considerations when developing and enforcing agency-specific social media policies relating to out-of-home care providers and youth placed in out-of-home care.

Confidentiality Background: Wisconsin state statutes and Wisconsin administrative rules, repeatedly address resident and client/patient rights to privacy concerning healthcare, treatment and personal information. All agencies and providers have a fundamental obligation to protect the rights of their clients/patients, specifically, including foster youth. The failure to protect a client/patient/foster youth's privacy and confidential information could also form the basis for negative licensing action and/or civil or criminal liability. This must be taken into consideration when creating and enforcing agency policies that relate to out-home-care provider usage of social media.

Language to consider and utilize in agency-specific policy:

(Name of organization) is committed to the safety, well-being and privacy protection of individuals served by the organization. (Name of organization) recognizes that social media is deeply embedded in societal culture and has provided many individuals the ability to be more connected to others than ever before. (Name of organization) also recognizes that relationships are vital to human growth and development and we strive to create safe environments to support healthy relationships. This document was established to provide guidance and structure to out-of-home care providers related to interaction with current and former foster youth via the internet and social media.

Considerations relating to Social Media Use by Out-of-Home Care Provider:

1. (Name of organization) requires the permission of the foster youth's parent/guardian prior to the out-of-home care provider engaging in social networking exchanges with youth currently or formerly in out-of-home care. (See Technology and Social Media Agreement for Youth: Technology Device Use section of agreement)
2. Do not post confidential identifying information about youth in out-of-home care and their families on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Myspace, Snapchat, or other social networking sites without written permission of foster youth's parent/guardian and the assigned caseworker. (see Social Media Consent Form) It is best practice to discuss social media use with the foster youth's parent/guardian and the assigned caseworker in the interest of maintaining confidentiality and safety. Consider the following:
 - Assume that anything posted, sent, or e-mailed online could be viewed by anyone, anywhere, and at any time.
 - Prioritize the youth's best interest and consider the long-term impact and consequences of online postings and photos.
3. Professional boundaries are clearly defined limits that facilitate safe connections between out-of-home care providers and youth in out-of-home care. Out-of-home care providers must maintain professional boundaries related to social media with current youth and former youth placed in their care. Professional boundaries help to safeguard the out-of-home care provider and foster youth relationship and establish a framework for interaction that benefits the foster youth and protects confidentiality of the youth. As early as possible in the relationship with the foster youth, with guidance from the caseworker, out-of-home care providers must establish clear boundaries related to communication with the foster youth, specifically related to social media. It is expected that the out-of-home care provider maintain confidentiality, engage in professional interactions, and provide supportive communication within the social networking sites.

4. Most of the information provided to out-of-home care providers regarding youth placed in their care is confidential and its release is strictly limited by state and federal law. The following statement is from the Wisconsin Administrative Code, Ch. DCF 56, which governs the licensing of out-of-home care providers:

“Foster parents and other persons in the foster home who have access to confidential information about the foster child and his/her family may not discuss or otherwise disclose that information to anyone while the child is in the foster home, or after the child leaves the foster home except (a) to the licensing agency or the agency placing the child in the home; (b) by order of the juvenile court, or (c) as provided by law.”

Considerations relating to Social Media Use by Youth Placed in Out-of-Home Care:

1. Name of organization recognizes that connections for youth may be identified and fostered through social networking. Children ages 13 and older are able to access social networking sites if the youth’s parent/guardian and treatment team supports the activity. The youth’s treatment team shall address this topic and work together to individualize a youth-specific Technology and Social Media Agreement. This agreement template is attached to this policy.
2. Consideration of the use of technology access is for the youth to provide their username and password to their out-of-home care provider for their social networking accounts. At the discretion of the agency, out-of-home care providers may confirm that the username and password continue to function and shall collaborate with the treatment team to develop strategies to monitor the youth’s use of social media.

Refer to the caseworker for guidance on the boundaries of out-of-home care providers regarding having access to a foster youths’ social media account.

Source: Southeastern Region, Foster Care Coordinators, Wisconsin 2016

Technology and Social Media Agreement for Foster Youth

Youth Name: _____

Together with my parent(s)/guardian(s), care provider (s), case worker and treatment team, I will develop and agree to a Technology and Social media Agreement.

Phone: I am entering care with a cell phone that will be paid by myself or by my parent/guardian:

- Yes
 No

If I have a cell phone, I understand that sending negative voice, text or picture messages and “sexting” will not be accepted and could result in my cell phone privileges to be taken away. ____ (youth’s initials)

Computer/Technology Device Use:

- Computer/technology usage will be determined by each care provider’s household rules.
- I will not download any content onto the care provider’s computer without asking permission first.
- I agree to provide my care provider(s) with all my user names and passwords for any and all internet services I utilize. (This includes, but is not limited to e-mail accounts, Facebook, Twitter and Skype.)
- I give permission for the care provider(s) to engage in “friend-ing”/connecting with _____ (youth’s name) through social media/networking platforms in an effort to provide supervision of the youth during placement and to maintain connections after leaving care.
- I will not falsify my age in order to gain access to any internet services that require an age minimum that I am not. (Example: You must be 13 or older in order to create a Facebook account.)
- I understand that my computer/technology device does not guarantee unlimited access and use will be monitored by my care provider (s).
- I understand that I am allowed to post appropriate pictures and/or information about myself; however, I am not allowed to post information or pictures about any other foster youth or other children in the home.

I agree to follow these safety guidelines:

- I will follow the care provider’s technology rules
- I will think before I post anything on the internet and will ask for advice when I’m unsure. I understand that things posted on the internet can be viewed by anyone.
- For my own safety and privacy, I will not post private information like my last name, address, phone number, school or social security number on-line.
- I will talk to an adult in advance about posting pictures of myself, family or friends online.
- I will trust my “inner voice/gut feelings”. If I ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable, I will tell an adult or someone I trust.

I understand that the use of technology in the care provider’s home is a privilege and can be restricted or suspended if I do not follow the rules in this agreement.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| _____ Youth’s Printed Name | _____ Youth’s Signature | _____ Date |
| _____ Parent/Guardian Printed Name | _____ Parent/Guardian Signature | _____ Date |
| _____ Case Worker’s Printed Name | _____ Case Worker’s Signature | _____ Date |

Care Provider (s) Printed Name

Care Provider (s) Signature

Date

Social Media Consent Form

I, _____, Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of _____, D.O.B.: _____, state that I have custody and/or the legal authority to sign this document. By signing this document, I hereby consent to allowing my child the use of the following types of social media while placed in out of home care. I understand and acknowledge that there are potential risks involved with allowing my child the use of social media. I have placed my initials in the space(s) indicated below for each activity for which I give consent for participation by my child. I do however, understand that the care providers for my child do have the right under the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard to over-rule my decision on cell phone and other technology usage. I understand that the care providers will take into consideration my child's age, maturity and developmental level when making such decisions. I understand that I have the right to modify the extent to which my child may participate in the activity by indication on the exemptions/provisions line following a description of the activity.

INITIALS:

_____ **Social Media:** Included, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkIn, Snap Chat, Pinterest, Instagram, Foursquare, Vine, Tumblr, Skype, Myspace, blogs, video gaming, instant messaging, forums, message boards, text messaging.

Exemptions or additional provisions: _____

_____ **Online Accounts and Applications:** My child shall have access to online accounts and applications, as long as he/she meets the minimum guidelines for the website or application.

Exemptions or additional provisions: _____

_____ **Information Sharing:** My child shall be allowed to post pictures and information about him/herself anywhere and anytime.

Exemptions or additional provisions: _____

_____ **Foster Parent(s) Use of Social Media:** Care providers may post photographs and videos of my child on social media sites and may tag my child or myself in the photograph/video.

Exemptions or additional provisions: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian

Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

Foster Youth

Case Worker

Date

Care Provider

Care Provider

Date