Social Media & Digital Technology Policy
Salisbury University School of Social Work

The Purpose of this Policy

The Internet, digital technologies and mobile devices have created the ability for students and social workers to communicate and share information quickly and to reach millions of people. Participating in social networking and other similar Internet opportunities can support a student's personal expression, enable individual social workers to have a professional presence online, foster collegiality and camaraderie within the profession, and provide the opportunity to widely advocate for social policies and other communication. Social networks, blogs, and other forms of communication online also create new challenges to the social worker-client relationship.

The School of Social Work has developed these guidelines to help students reduce risk as they enter the Social Work Program, and to learn how to use social media in professional ways. This policy incorporates guidance from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the NASW Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice, and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS competencies (NASW, 2017a; NASW, 2017b; CSWE, 2015).

Definition – Social and Digital Media

Social networks are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their lists of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Digital media includes laptops, tablets, smart phones and any form of wearable technology.

Social media includes but is not limited to:
- Blogs, and micro-blogs such as Twitter
- Social networks, such as Facebook
- Professional networks, such as LinkedIn
- Video sharing, such as YouTube, Second Life, and vlogs (video logs)
- Audio sharing, such as podcasts
- Photo sharing, such as Flickr, Instagram, SnapChat, and Photobucket
- Social bookmarking, such as Digg and Redditt
- Public comment sections on web pages
- User created web pages such as Wikis and Wikipedia

Social & Digital Media Policy

1. Abide by copyright laws, Creative Commons Licensing and other ethical guidelines when citing the work of others.
2. In accordance with the Salisbury University School of Social Work Technical Standards and the NASW Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice (NASW 2017b), it is a violation if students:

a) Take any pictures or videos of other people in any location without seeking permission.

b) Post on behalf of Salisbury University Social Work Department or as an official representative for the Salisbury University Social Work Department.

c) Refer to anyone or any group in a disparaging, disrespectful, or threatening way, even if the person or group has not been identified. This includes, but is not limited to clients, families, students, faculty, and staff.

3. Students should maintain standards of client privacy and confidentiality, including HIPPA guidelines, in all environments including online and digital, and must refrain from posting any and all identifiable client information online.

4. If they interact with clients on the Internet, students must maintain appropriate boundaries of the social worker-client relationship in accordance with NASW Code of Ethics and the NASW Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice (NASW 2017a; NASW, 2017b), just as they would in any other context:

   a) To maintain appropriate professional boundaries students should consider separating personal and professional content online.

   b) When students see content posted by colleagues that appear unprofessional they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the student should report the matter to appropriate authorities (e.g. Salisbury University IT department or Program Chair).

   c) Students should not share, post, or transmit any personal information, health information, or images of others (including but not limited to: clients, students, and faculty) by way of any electronic media. Sharing this information is a violation of clients' rights to confidentiality and privacy.

   d) To maintain confidentiality, students should not engage or communicate with clients and their family members or legally appointed decision makers on social networking sites.

   e) Except for urgent professional reasons, students should not search for clients via search engines or social media.

Students who violate the social and digital media policy do so at the risk of disciplinary action potentially by the agency and the School of Social Work. Consequences can include but may not be limited to: violation of HIPAA procedures/guidelines and/or failure in a course or dismissal from the program. Please refer to the School of Social Work handbook for your program, specifically the

Technical Standards found here:
http://www.salisbury.edu/socialwork/Misc%20Items/Tech%20Standards%20Only%20rev%207-23-14.pdf

Best Practices for Using Social & Digital Media

- Always use your Salisbury University email address for university related matters, as it is the official form of communication for Salisbury University.
- Privacy does not exist in the world of Social Media. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if a post is deleted. If in doubt, do not post!
- Be familiar with and use conservative privacy settings regardless of the content on social media profiles and seek to separate personal and professional information online.
- Additionally, students should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.
- When using the Internet for professional networking, students should work to build professional online communities that support the values of the social work profession by developing authentic, ethical digital profiles and contributing content that is appropriate, respectful, and credible.
- Ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your professional goals.
  - In electronic communications: Include a greeting (if you do not know your professor's title (Dr., Mr. or Ms.) please address them as professor), a brief discussion that includes why you are contacting them, and a sign-off with a signature line.
  - If identifying yourself as a student, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues, clients, and potential employers. Identify views as your own.
- You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts).

Adapted from

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