**Social Media: Sample Policy and Procedure[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Policy.**

The use of social media presents both risks and rewards. It also carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist employees, interns, contractors, and volunteers with making responsible decisions about the use of social media, *[Health Center Name]* (“Health Center”) has established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media. This policy applies to all Health Center employees, interns, contractors, and volunteers.

Social media may not be accessed through Health Center computers without authorization of the CEO.

Conduct that adversely affects job performance, the performance of fellow employees or otherwise adversely affects patients, practitioners, or people who work on behalf of Health Center or Health Center’s legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Purpose.**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the appropriate business use of social media.

**Definitions.**

*Social media* includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with Health Center, as well as any other form of electronic communication. Forms of social media include, but are not limited to, written text, audio recording, photography, and video recording.

*Protected Health Information* (PHI)means individually identifiable health information that is transmitted by electronic media, maintained in electronic media, or transmitted or maintained in any other form or medium.

**Procedure.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Health Center has established the following guidelines for appropriate use of social media.

**Do’s and Don’ts for use of social media**

**DO:**

* Understand that all data and information that is entered, received, stored, or transmitted via Health Center’s electronic resources is the property of Health Center and employees should have no expectation of privacy with respect to such data and information.
* Exercise good judgment. Health Center does not wish to interfere with the personal lives of its employees, but employees should be aware that their personal on-line life may be perceived as linked to their professional life.
* Be fair and courteous to fellow employees, vendors, or people who work on behalf of Health Center.
* Keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, or intimidating, that disparage employees, or vendors, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone’s reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or company policy.
* Always make sure you are honest and accurate when posting information. If you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything: therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about Health Center, fellow employees, vendors, or people working on behalf of Health Center.
* Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for Health Center. If Health Center is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of Health Center, fellow employees, vendors or people working on behalf of Health Center. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with Health Center, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of Health Center. It is best to include a disclaimer such as “The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Health Center.” If you become aware of a post that may require an official response from Health Center or could otherwise become an issue for the organization, contact and inform your supervisor and the Human Resources and Marketing Departments for proper handling.
* Be particular about your “friends” and associations and check the privacy and security settings on your accounts.
* Access social media only on your personal devices and/or cell phones, and only during lunch/break times.

**DON’T:**

* Use offensive language or engage in harassment or intimidation. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination. It is a violation of this policy to electronically communicate in a manner which is obscene, harassing, abusive, or threatens an individual's safety, in accordance with the Health Center’s policies on harassment.

* Exchange proprietary/confidential information - Employees are prohibited from posting or disclosing proprietary/confidential information. This may include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how and technology. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related confidential communications.
* Use social media inappropriately.
* Use social media while engaged in work activities.
* Use your Health Center email address for personal social networking accounts.
* Share PHI via social media. This includes posting pictures or video of patients of the Health Center. Communicating this information will result in discharge from employment and possible prosecution under federal or state law.

**Retaliation is prohibited**

Health Center prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**This policy and procedure shall be periodically reviewed and updated consistent with the requirements and standards established by the Board of Directors and health center management, federal and state laws and regulations, and applicable accrediting and review organizations.**

**Responsible parties:**

### Signature Date

### Executive Director

Signature Date

1. The Authors of these materials include attorneys at the law firm of Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell LLP. The sample documents offer general guidance based on federal law and regulations, and do not necessarily apply to all health centers under all facts and circumstances. Further, these materials do not replace, and are not a substitute for, legal advice from qualified legal counsel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Authors’ note: Using the following sample as a guide, health centers should tailor the procedure to reflect their own structures and operations. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)