

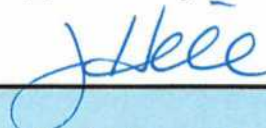
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
PROCEDURAL MEMORANDUM No. 13-07

TO: All Staff

Date: July 1, 2021

Initiated by: Office of Public Affairs

Approved by the County Executive:



SUBJECT: Social Media Policy for Official Fairfax County Accounts

I. Purpose

The Fairfax County Government Social Media Policy serves as the primary document that governs the county's official use of social media.

II. Background

Every day people discuss, debate and engage Fairfax County Government in many online conversations. Fairfax County recognizes the vital importance of listening to our community, participating in conversations and sharing factual social content.

In this spirit, Fairfax County has **adopted seven overarching philosophies that guide official social media accounts:**

1. Publish content, engage our community and provide customer service with relevant, timely and actionable information.
2. Establish our voice and build confidence that Fairfax County Government is a credible source for trusted information.
3. Use social media aggressively during emergencies and emerging incidents to inform and empower our community.
4. Integrate a One Fairfax equity lens into social media posts, responses, imagery and campaigns.
5. Monitor conversations and participate in individual, neighborhood, local, regional, state and/or national conversations.
6. Pair social media with other ways to deliver and share content, such as paid, earned and owned media.
7. Ensure the security of our social media accounts, prevent cyber vandalism and provide proper training for publishers.

III. Governance & Responsibilities

Official county social media is governed through the following structure:

A. Office of Public Affairs

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) directs and leads all countywide efforts on social media including:

- Providing overall strategic direction for the county's official social media presence
- Managing the main county social media accounts on each platform
- Updating policies and procedures as social media evolves
- Creating new accounts if approved
- Managing staff access to official accounts
- Serving as silent administrator of all accounts
- Directing or (as requested) publishing messages to all or select accounts
- Deciding whether comments on social media can be deleted and if people can be banned
- Combating misinformation and disinformation when applicable
- Coordinating countywide and issue campaigns as needed
- Coordinating messaging, response and monitoring during emergencies and emerging incidents, including following Emergency Operations Plan protocols
- Providing training opportunities
- Updating Social Media Publishing Handbook, Social Media Resource Center and Teams collaboration platform
- Producing metrics reports
- Ensuring proper archiving of social media content
- Exploring and approving new social media options and platforms

B. Office of the County Attorney

The Office of the County Attorney (OCA) provides legal guidance about all aspects of social media, including suggesting policy changes based on new law.

C. Department of Information Technology

The Department of Information Technology (DIT) supports social media in many ways, including, but not limited to, official account protection support, incident investigations, guidance consistent with other IT policies and integrating social media into larger E-government strategies, policies and tools.

D. Social Media Council

The Social Media Council, led by OPA, includes select representatives from various departments who provide advice and feedback regarding the county's social media efforts. Members of the council review new social media account applications, serve as the adjudicating body if a member of the public files a grievance and provide general guidance.

E. Social Media Publishers

Only county employees may serve as publishers of official accounts. Volunteers, interns, contractors and board/authority/commission members may not serve as social media publishers and must not publish directly to official accounts. Department social media publishers are responsible for adhering to this policy and all subsequent guidance that shall be communicated in other ways. Social media publishers must conduct themselves as official representatives of the government following the county's code of ethics and other related policies. Duties include taking required training, serving as the contact for an account, developing a

framework for posting information and responding to comments, adhering to policies, ensuring social media accounts are regularly updated and coordinating with other official accounts as needed.

F. All Department Staff

Even though social media publishers maintain daily content for their departments, department leadership must ensure publishers are meeting responsibilities outlined in this policy. In addition, all department staff should be advised of social media requirements and must not request/require publishers to violate policy.

IV. Policy

This policy applies to all county government staff and contractors. This policy does not apply to the Board of Supervisors, which adopted its own social media policy.

In addition to the policy outlined below, all social media content on official accounts and any process for managing an official account must be in compliance with:

- Updates communicated by OPA through collaboration platforms (Microsoft Teams), the Social Media Resource Center (FairfaxNet) through email or by other methods that may be introduced in the future
- DIT's security policies and standards
- All county policies, including the Fairfax County Code of Ethics, human resources policies/regulations, and local, state and federal law regarding use of copyrighted or trademarked material, right to privacy, records retention, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, the Virginia Government Data and Dissemination Practices Act and the First Amendment.

A. Social Media Publishing Handbook

The Social Media Publishing Handbook provides additional detail and specific guidance about channels, best practices and more. The guide is intended to evolve as social media changes frequently, so publishers are expected to follow the guidance in the handbook as though it is policy.

B. Policy Violations

OPA will make every effort to work with publishers to address policy violations and provide guidance for compliance. Publishers who violate this policy will be notified to address issues. OPA will notify department supervisors of repeated noncompliance. OPA reserves the right to revoke publishing rights for publishers who consistently violate this policy.

C. Requesting Accounts

OPA is the only authorized department that may create official social media accounts. Departments/offices/programs may not create their own accounts. To request the required application form for an official social media account, contact OPA at socialmedia@fairfaxcounty.gov. If a new account is approved, OPA will create the account with an approved name chosen by OPA based on precedent and platform options; establish proper settings and branding for the account; and provide publishing rights to approved staff after training has been completed.

If a consultant or third-party suggests creating a new official government account for a campaign or effort, county staff must still seek approval following the procedures in this policy.

Not all county departments/offices/programs need their own social media accounts. It is strongly recommended to leverage existing accounts and established audiences.

D. Requesting Publisher Access

Supervisors of publishers must submit a social media access request form to OPA. New publishers must also provide documentation that required training has been completed. Supervisors or publishers must also alert OPA when publisher access needs to change. OPA reserves the right to limit the number of publishers per account.

E. Deactivating or Transferring a Social Media Account

Publishers must notify OPA before any account is deactivated or publishing is ceased, including any approved accounts established by vendors or consultants.

F. Content That Cannot Be Posted

The Social Media Publishing Handbook provides tips and best practices for what to post, but this policy section details what publishers cannot post:

1. Information about items in litigation or about claims that could be brought against the county
2. Nonpublic, personnel, sensitive or confidential information of any kind
3. Medical information that violates a person's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protections
4. Content that infringes on copyrights or trademarks
5. Content that exposes a person's personally identifiable information such as a social security number, home address, etc.
6. Political (campaign) content
7. Harassing/offensive content
8. Endorsements of businesses, products or services (Note: while endorsements are not allowed, acknowledgements, in accordance with the Acknowledgements and Endorsements Policy (PM 13-03), are permitted)

G. Managing Comments and Conversations

Comments from everyone are welcome on official social media sites, but comments must be monitored with frequency. County-created social media forums must be structured to focus discussions on a limited topic chosen by the publisher rather than creating a "public forum" open to any type of conversation.

All publishers must complete initial and recurring training on how to properly manage social media comments in order to obtain/retain their access. Publishers may only remove comments and request to block/ban users based on the criteria and procedures outlined in section H below and in the Social Media Publishing Handbook.

H. Comments Policy

[View the most current version of the county's social media comments policy](#), which includes criteria publishers must consider when reporting a comment to OPA for possible deletion; the county's right to ban people; that social platforms sometimes have their own rules independent of the county; how private messages are considered; and the redress policy if someone thinks the county took wrongful action.

I. Emergencies and Emerging Incidents

During emergencies or emerging incidents, all social media content must be coordinated with the Office of Public Affairs (or the designated lead department) as part of Emergency Support Function 15 protocols.

Depending on the incident, publishers may be directed to point to specific social media sites that will serve as

the main source(s) of information. All incidents evolve over time and the county may need to change how social media assets are being used from strategic and tactical perspectives.

There are generally two scenarios when social media needs to be coordinated:

- 1. Joint Information Center Activations**

Publishers will be notified of Joint Information Center activations and deactivations. Following ESF 15 guidelines and other Emergency Operations Plan protocols, OPA may direct that select agencies staff social media.

- 2. Emerging Issues and Incidents**

When an issue or incident emerges in our community, an official Joint Information Center may not be needed. However, close coordination for all communications, including social media, is still required.

J. Reporting Fake Accounts, Misleading Information and Scams

Misinformation and disinformation are commonplace on social media, as are misleading accounts and scams. Fake or imposter social media accounts pretending to represent Fairfax County can result in frustration, confusion and distrust.

All cases of fake or misleading accounts should be reported to OPA for awareness and follow-up in coordination with OCA. OPA will report fake accounts to social media companies following their processes as applicable.

K. Using Links

As an extension of the county's communications platform, social media sites should include links that direct users back to the county's website for more information, forms, documents or online services as necessary.

External links to media articles or other relevant content are permitted on official county social media sites to encourage conversation and to share information, but external links on the county's official website, fairfaxcounty.gov, are governed by the Public Website Content Policy (PM 13-04).

L. Including Social Content on the County Website

The county website is governed by a separate policy (13-04), which says official county social media accounts or other federal, state or local government social media content (link or embedded content) may be included on the county website.

M. Photos /Copyright

Publishers are expected to use only items created by the county or those items which the county has a legal right to use. Creation of social media content might involve incorporation of original works of third parties (e.g., literature, photographs, music, software, film, and video works) that are covered by copyright laws. Publishers must obtain permissions that may be necessary to incorporate works of third parties in their web content. If permission is not granted or known, then publishers must not use those images/videos, but rather use county-approved images/videos, Creative Commons (royalty free) content or use staff-generated media.

Photos of individuals may appear on the social media accounts provided the image was taken at a public facility and the photo depicts a county program or service. Signed photo release forms may be received for

members of the public who are identifiable in the image. Releases are not necessary for county employees if the photo relates to county employment.

N. Accessibility

As platforms allow, publishers should include relevant information to ensure the accessibility of social media content, such as, but not limited to, alt tags for photos, captions for videos and other methods that ensure content is accessible to everyone.

O. Language Translation

In the spirit of the county's One Fairfax policy, departments may choose to have content translated. Publishers can share translated social content on official accounts, but also coordinate with OPA, which manages countywide language-specific social media accounts.

P. Security

Credentials for official county social media sites should be managed according to the county's password policy as outlined in the Information Security Policy (PM 70-05). In many cases, OPA retains passwords to official accounts and those passwords cannot be shared with publishers. In the event of a compromise, or suspected compromise, passwords should be changed immediately and OPA and DIT Information Security should be notified immediately.

Publishers must manage official accounts on county-issued computers or devices. Some social platforms automatically provide access to official accounts through personal login information. If that automatic access is provided on personal devices, then publishers must protect county information by using a passcode that devices. If a publisher loses a county-issued or personal phone with automatic access to official channels, then OPA and DIT Information Security must be notified immediately and social media administrative rights will be temporarily removed.

Q. Archives, Retention and VFOIA

Nearly all social media activity, including posts, images, comments and direct messages, is archived by a third-party system. If content is modified or deleted, all versions remain available within the third-party system. All social media content is subject to Virginia Freedom of Information Act requests, though all public-facing social media content is available for anyone to search on the county's Social Media Hub at

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/social-hub/>.

R. Board of Supervisors' Policy

The Board of Supervisors adopted its own policy that governs its members' use of social media for official member accounts. Refer to the Social Media Publishers Handbook.