

CHAPTER:	7 – CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE	ADOPTED: 3/7/12
SECTION:	16 – SOCIAL NETWORKING/MEDIA	REVISED: 5/22/24

This policy is intended to address issues related to an employee's use of "social networking" and "social media," to the extent that such use involves or affects the County's operations.

The County of Gloucester recognizes and respects the rights of employees to engage in their own personal activities while not working. This policy is intended to help employees engage in respectful, knowledgeable interaction in social media and also protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the County of Gloucester, employees, volunteers, contract staff, vendors, customers and residents with whom they have a work-based relationship. This policy is not intended to violate any speech or associational rights that are protected by the United States Constitution, the New Jersey State Constitution, or statutory provisions such as the Employer-Employee Relations Act and the Conscientious Employee Protection Act. For example, employees have a First Amendment right to speak as citizens on matters of public concern regarding County policies or officials, provided their speech does not disrupt County operations. In addition, employees have a right to discuss working conditions, grievances, and union representation, provided again that County operations are not disrupted.

GUIDELINES

Employees' use of social media should be respectful to co-workers, volunteers, contract staff, vendors, customers, and residents with whom they have a work-based relationship.

The County of Gloucester's general policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, and all other policies and procedures extend to all forms of communication, including social media.

The County recognizes its employees' right to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites with regard to matters of public concern. The use of social media to harass, threaten, libel or discriminate against employees, vendors, customers or residents with whom there is a work-based relationship will not be tolerated. Employees who believe they have been harassed or otherwise discriminated against by a co-worker via social media are encouraged to address such complaints to management.

Except in emergency situations or as part of their officially assigned or regular or permitted duties, employees while on duty are prohibited from taking, releasing or disclosing any photographs, pictures, digital images or audio recordings of any crime scenes, traffic crashes, accident victims, arrestees, detainees, or the like with any personal analog or digital device, camera, imaging device, audio recorder or cellular telephone.

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Employees should be aware that such photographs, images or recording taken with any personal device pursuant to this section may be considered evidence and are subject to applicable laws, code guideline or directive concerning storage release and disposal. Employees who have recorded any photographs, images or recordings with any personal device shall notify their supervisors as soon as practical. For the purposes of this section, an “emergency situation” involves a sudden and unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action, assistance or relief, and may include accidents, crimes and flights from accidents or crimes.

Employees shall not provide links to any of the County of Gloucester’s internal internet material in any non-work-related social media.

Employees shall not reference the County of Gloucester’s provided e-mail accounts as a point of contact in any social media, unless so authorized.

An employee’s use of social media is outside the scope of employment and is not a representation or authorized communication of any kind on behalf of the County of Gloucester, unless the employee has the approval of management to participate in social media on behalf of the County of Gloucester. In using social media in a non work-related setting, employees shall neither express or imply that they are: (1) speaking or acting on behalf of the County of Gloucester; or (2) representing or presenting the interests of the County of Gloucester.

The County of Gloucester requests and encourages all employees to bring work-related social media complaints to the Supervisor, Department Head, or County Administration in order to provide the County of Gloucester with a fair opportunity to address any such complaints or concerns.

Violations of this policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Employees must recognize that they may be legally liable for postings they make in social media.