



Social Media Account Management Policy

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1. **Purpose**

The Social Media Account Management Policy serves to outline how County departments and employees can establish, manage, and moderate official Buncombe County social media profiles and pages. This policy also provides the role and responsibility of Communications & Public Engagement (CAPE) related to all official Buncombe County social media accounts, including training, account management, and approved content and assets.

2. **Applicability**

This policy applies to all Buncombe County departments and employees. Where there is conflict with any department-specific policy, this document will supersede.

This policy does not prevent the Social Work Program of Buncombe County Health and Human Services from creating, maintaining, and using social media accounts for the purpose of contacting persons involved with social work cases (or the associated investigation therein). These accounts used by the Department of Social Services will not post publicly on behalf of the county or department.

3. **Policy**

3.1. Creation of County Social Media Accounts

Official County social media pages and profiles must be made to be accessible, recognizable, and encompass Buncombe County's mission, vision, and values. CAPE will maintain a list of social media platforms approved for County use. County employees and departments cannot create accounts or profiles that speak on behalf of or claim to speak on behalf of the County or any department on non-approved platforms, accounts or profiles. A list of acceptable platforms can be found in Procedures. Official County social media pages and profiles are not to be created without prior approval from the CAPE team and the appropriate department director or designee. Social media pages and profiles will be set up by a member of the CAPE Team or their designee. A member of the CAPE Team will maintain administrator access to the account at all times.

3.2. Social Media Administrator Training

All Buncombe County employees who run or have access to official County social media accounts are required to attend a Social Media Administrator Training, which will be offered by

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CAPE regularly and as needed. Anyone with access to an official County page must undergo Social Media Administrator Training before they can begin making posts to the profile.

- 3.2.1. Account Tracking: If a page has been requested, there should be at least one departmental employee designated to keep track of each official County social media page or profile. Comments, messages, and all other interactions should be monitored by that employee and handled in a timely manner (providing additional content/information/link; hiding a comment; warning user of inappropriate comment; providing additional information, etc.)
- 3.2.2. Analytics: Accessing analytics which will be used to track data will be covered in the Social Media Administrator Training.

3.3. Branding

Buncombe County Government follows a branding style guide. These branding guidelines will be used on all Buncombe County social media accounts, where applicable.

- 3.3.1. Acceptable Use of Branding: The Buncombe County Branding Style Guide should be used when making official announcements or formal posts over social media. County social media accounts will have some flexibility when making informal and engaging posts.
- 3.3.2. Style Guide: Refer to the Social Media Account Management Procedures for the most recent Buncombe County branding guidelines.

3.4. Posting and Updating

Studies have shown that many residents get their news updates from official County social media pages. It is important to keep these pages up to date with relevant announcements and account managers must adhere to the following items:

- 3.4.1. Content Guidance: The content of social media posts can be kept casual but must remain professional and purely informational. Special characters such as emoji are acceptable. Inappropriate images or language are never permitted. Posts advocating for political positions, people, or funding violate N.C. General Statute and cannot be posted.
- 3.4.2. Language Access: Formal announcements, such as closures, official business, or emergency-related content posted through official County pages or profiles must be made language accessible for the County population.
- 3.4.3. ADA Compliance: When posting images to an official County social media page or profile, it is important that they are ADA compliant. ADA compliance will be covered during Social Media Administrator Training, and additional information can be found in the procedures document.
- 3.4.4. Mistakes and Errors in Posts: Corrections of errors and mistakes must be made as soon as they are discovered. Please refer to the related procedures document.

3.5. User Content

While social media is often used for entertainment purposes, it is still important to abide by Buncombe County's mission statement when making all content-related decisions on County pages. The Social Media Account Management Policy must be clearly labeled and readily available within the "About" section of every official County social media page or profile. Official County social media pages and profiles are considered limited public forum and must be labeled as such.

Residents interacting with official County social media pages and profiles are considered customers and will be treated the same as they would be in a front-facing environment. When responding to comments and messages, staff should refrain from using any language which could be mistaken as anything other than professional.

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3.6. Advertising

Each department may make a request for an advertising budget for their social media pages or profiles during the annual budget process. All social media advertising dollars will come from the budget of the associated department. Departments may have the option to promote a post. Promoting a post will show it to more people as they scroll through their feeds, meaning they are more likely to respond to the content. When setting up targeting for promoted posts, non-discriminatory targets must be used at all times. When making a promoted post on a County social media page, it is extremely important to edit and proofread the content before it is submitted.

3.7. Trademarks and Intellectual Property Rights

Logos should not be used from outside of the organization without prior written consent from the proper party. Additionally, images pulled from the internet without proper attribution and permissions should not be used. CAPE will maintain a library of acceptable images for use.

3.8. Security

Department leadership will select the position best suited to manage a department's social media accounts. Passwords for official County social media pages and profiles should be kept secure. If an employee with administrator access leaves their role with the County, the password for that account must be changed, and their access must be removed. Transfer of credentials must happen before separation of the employee, except when the nature of separation is unforeseen. All employees with access to social media accounts will have role-based provisioning through the IT Department.

3.9. Photography and Recorded Video

Photography and recorded videos, when used appropriately, are a useful tool in generating engagement, informing residents, and creating a personable persona. Photographs posted to social media should meet Buncombe County standards for professionalism, should not contain content inappropriate for any age group, and should be a high-resolution image that depicts its content clearly. Any person in the photo or video, whose face is clearly visible, must consent to the widespread circulation of the image before it can be posted.

Never include the faces of minors in photography or recorded video without written consent from the legal guardian. When photos or videos of minors are needed without written consent, stock photo or video may be used.

3.10. Live Video

Live video is used by official County pages and profiles to stream public meetings, such as Commissioners' Briefings, Regular Meetings, and more. Any official County page or profile may use this tool to share their meeting or event to the public.

3.11. Partner Organizations

It is appropriate to re-share or promote posts that come from partner organizations. All content must still adhere to Buncombe County Government's social media standards.

3.12. Restricted Areas

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There are certain areas of County property where it is not permitted to share photos or videos publicly, nor are members of the public allowed to do so. These include but are not limited to areas where privacy laws could be violated, such as certain areas of Health & Human Services.

3.13. Emergency Events

In the case of an emergency, official County social media pages and profiles will be used to inform residents. The County may also elect to post similar messaging on all pages associated with Buncombe County Government.

3.14. Removing Comments

Comments made by users may not be hidden unless they target an individual employee, contain harassment, use profanity, compromise an investigation, contain protected information, target a protected class, and/or promote disinformation. Because all comments are public record, no comments are to be deleted.

3.15. Blocking Users

Users cannot be blocked from official County social media pages or profiles unless they have violated the adopted Social Media User Policy three times, with a clear and concise warning from an administrator each time.

4. Policy Non-Compliance

Employees willfully violating the terms and conditions of this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

5. Audit

All policies for Buncombe County may be subject to audit or review as outlined in the [Internal Auditor's Statement](#).

6. Definitions

- 6.1.** Accessible – content and accounts cannot restrict the ability of individuals to view and interact through intentional means (unless a user was banned in accordance with this policy). Content and accounts must also use language, grammar, visual assets, colors, and fonts that are easily decipherable and understood by most of the population.
- 6.2.** ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act.
- 6.3.** Administrator or editor access – Permission levels on a social media platform that come with the ability to create, publish, edit, manage, and moderate content on County social media accounts.
- 6.4.** Attribution and permissions – Images, video, text, and other content created by any non-Buncombe County entity or employee must be used in a way approved by the content creator or rights holder. Some content can be used freely, some requires that the rights holder receive acknowledgement that they own/created the work, and some content requires paid licensing.
- 6.5.** Branding – the distinctive design features used across all County media, as prescribed by CAPE. This includes but is not limited to: logos, colors, fonts, specific templates, and use practices.
- 6.6.** Emergency-related content – any content intended to provide timely information, instructions, or warnings related to an ongoing or imminent emergency or disaster.
- 6.7.** Emergency events – events actively occurring or reasonably expected to imminently occur, with widespread impact requiring immediate action, assistance, or relief.
- 6.8.** Emoji – A small digital image or icon.

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- 6.9.** Engagement – interactions by users with content, including but not limited to: seeing/reading/watching content, clicking on content, commenting on content, sharing or forwarding content, and saving content.
- 6.10.** HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This law, among other things, regulates the sharing of private health information (PHI). Buncombe County requires HIPAA training for anyone with access to PHI.
- 6.11.** Informal and engaging posts – A post meant for entertainment purposes, or to inform the community of minor announcements such as events.
- 6.12.** Official announcements or formal posts – A post which is made by the page to announce an emergency, such as inclement weather, or announcements which will impact the community, such as COVID-19 statistics and information.
- 6.13.** Partner organizations – any public, private, and/or non-profit organization with whom Buncombe County works in an official capacity.
- 6.14.** Promoting posts – Paying for content to be circulated more widely and given special prominence to increase engagement.
- 6.15.** Protected Class – A protected class is a group of people who are legally protected from being harmed or harassed by laws, practices, and policies that discriminate against them due to a shared characteristic (e.g. race, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation). These groups are protected by both U.S. federal and state laws.
- 6.16.** Public forum - a place used for the free exercise of the right to speech and public debate and assembly.
- 6.17.** Significant contrast – significant visual difference between text or images/icons and the background upon which they are displayed, allowing easy reading or interpretation.
- 6.18.** Targeting – Using social media platform tools to select the demographics of users for which content is intended and directed
 Tracking – Social media tracking is the process of monitoring the brand’s online conversations. When given the responsibility of tracking a social media page, the employee responsible will monitor public conversations, and keep track of data such as likes, comments, and views. Social analytics tools can help you listen to what people say about the brand on different social channels and keep track of this data.

7. Approval and Revision History

Policy Origination Date:	September 9, 2022
Requires Board Approval:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Board Approval Date:	
Revision History:	Enter Dates and changes

8. Background

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