

## **EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Central Rivers Area Education Agency expects its employees to model responsible and appropriate conduct, both at work and away from the job. Employees' use of social media forums, including social networking sites, personal web pages, blogs, and electronic messaging, are subject to the normal requirements of legal and ethical behavior within the Agency community. Employees should be guided by applicable laws, Agency policies, and sound professional judgment when using social media.

An employee using social media in his or her professional capacity as an employee of the Agency and/or pursuant to his or her official duties should be honest about who he or she is, and be thoughtful and respectful when submitting or posting messages. In addition, employees using social media for such purposes should adhere to the following guidelines:

- You must identify yourself and your position with the Agency. Always use your real name and never create an alias or be anonymous.
- The "centralriversaea.org" address attached to your name and/or email implies that you are acting on behalf of the Agency and, as such, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner.
- Any information shared via social media regarding the business of the Agency, whether using personal or Agency equipment, may be considered a public record. All information communicated through or maintained on the Agency's system is subject to being monitored or inspected at any time.
- Do not submit or post confidential information about the Agency, the students, families and educators we serve or current or past employees. You should assume that most information about a student is protected from disclosure by both federal law (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and state law (Iowa Code Section 22.7(1)). Disclosures of confidential or protected information may result in liability for invasion of privacy or defamation.
- Keep in mind that, by their very nature, social media forms such as social networking websites and web pages or blogs are not truly private. To minimize unintended disclosure of information, you should set and maintain your social networking privacy settings at the most restrictive level.
- Internet search engines can find information years after it was originally posted. Comments can be forwarded or copied and archival systems can save information even if you delete a post. You should assume that a message or image which is posted or communicated can never be completely deleted.
- Spell check and grammar check your content before you submit or post messages, and correct any mistakes as soon as you can. Remember that you are writing for publication, even if it is just for a social networking website. Refrain from making unsubstantiated statements and avoid careless comments, such as "research shows" unless you also provide full citations of the research.

The Agency recognizes the prevalence of social media used for personal purposes and acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment to speak out on matters of public concern. However, the Agency also has the right to regulate the speech of employees when that speech in certain circumstances, such as when the personal use of social media interferes with the employee's ability to perform his or her duties or affects the Agency's ability to efficiently provide educational services. Accordingly, it is essential that employees conduct themselves in such a way that their personal use of social media does not adversely affect their position with the Agency. In addition, employees using social media for such purposes should adhere to the following guidelines:

- If you are participating on a social networking website, web page, and/or blog for personal use, you may identify yourself as an employee of the Agency. However, you must state that you are expressing your own opinion, not that of the Agency. You will be held fully responsible for your activities.
- If you identify yourself as an Agency employee, remember that your actions will reflect not only on you but on the Agency as well.
- Never pretend to be someone else and submit or post information concerning the Agency.
- Do not use the Agency's logo, photographs, or any other such graphic representations or images, or link any personal page on a social networking website or other personal web page to any Agency website or material.
- If you submit or post information or comments that are not related to the Agency, your activities may still result in professional repercussions. Such actions include, but are not limited to, posting of photographs or information which violates federal or state law and regulations and/or Agency policies and rules.
  - Keep in mind that you do not have control of what others may submit or post on social networking websites; therefore, be aware that your conduct in your private life may affect your professional life. Be vigilant about what others post about you or on your page and, if necessary, take steps to remove comments that pose a risk to you or the Agency.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Employees who fail to comply with this policy or who make other inappropriate use of social media may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. If an employee has any questions about the application of this policy, he or she should consult his or her supervisor.