

	KANSAS CITY, MO POLICE DEPARTMENT <b>PERSONNEL POLICY</b>	DATE OF ISSUE 06/11/2025	EFFECTIVE DATE 06/11/2025	NO. 261-1
	SUBJECT Policy Series 200: Employee Guidelines 261 – Social Media and Networking			AMENDS
REFERENCE PPBM: Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct		RESCINDS 261		

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Department recognizes that social media provides a contemporary and potentially valuable means of assisting the Department and its members in meeting several police strategies, including, but not limited to; community outreach, problem-solving, investigations and crime prevention. The Department also recognizes that social media may also play a significant role in the personal lives of numerous Department members. However, it must be formally and universally recognized that the personal use of social media has the potential to impact the Department as a whole, as well as individual members serving in their official capacity. As such, this directive provides information of a precautionary nature, as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Department members.
- B. It is essential that each member accept his or her role as an ambassador of the Department. As such, each member must strive to maintain public trust and confidence, not only in their professional capacity, but also in their personal and on-line activities. Because members of this Department are held to a higher standard than general members of the public, the on-line activities of members of this Department will reflect such professional expectations and standards.
- C. The Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes and foster productivity.

## II. PURPOSE

- A. To establish guidelines regarding the use of social media and social networking by members of this Department while on and off duty.
- B. To establish the Department's position on the utility and management of social media and provide guidance on its management, administration and oversight.
- C. To set forth expectations of members with respect to their use of social media and social networking, the direct affect such use has upon the reputation, perception and interests of this Department and its' members. The actions and appearance the members of this Department portray to the public is vitally important, as it is directly connected to the respect society has for our members and the Department as a whole

- D. This directive is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, to allow for new tools and future technologies.

### III. TERMINOLOGY

- A. **Blog** - A series of entries, written entries, written by either one person or a group of people, in an on-line journal, usually posted in chronological order, like a diary. Blogs can allow or disallow comments on entries.
- B. **Comments** – Responses to a blog post, news article, social media entry or other social networking post.
- C. **Internet** – A computer network consisting of a worldwide network of computer networks that use the TCP/IP network protocols to facilitate data transmission and exchange.
- D. **Page** – The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- E. **Post** – The act of creating, uploading, editing or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, photographs, audio, video or any other multimedia file.
- F. **Profile** – Information a user provides about him or herself on a social networking site.
- G. **Social Media** – On-line sources that allow people to communicate, share, and/or exchange information with others via some form of on-line or cellular network platform. Information may include, but is not limited to; text, photographs, video, audio, and other multimedia files.
- \*H. **Social Networking** – On-line platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies. This includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snap Chat, Pinterest, MySpace, Twitter, Nixle, Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Foursquare, message or on-line bulletin boards, or blogs.
- I. **Speech** – Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

### IV. POLICY

- A. General
  - 1. Members are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this Department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties,

impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public or professional perception of the Department.

2. Members are cautioned that speech on or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties is not protected under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Department.
3. Members should assume their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position and this Department.
4. When using social media, members should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain, where there is generally no reasonable expectation of privacy, regardless if such domain has a private setting. As such, the content of social networking sites may be obtained for use in criminal trials, civil proceedings and Department investigations.
5. Members utilizing social media, whether personally or professionally, will adhere to the following:
  - a. All Department written directives, specifically "Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct."
  - b. Federal, state and local laws.
  - c. All laws, procedures and regulations regarding public information on arrests, investigations and personnel data.
6. Members are prohibited from the following:
  - a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or other protected class of individuals.
  - b. Speech involving themselves or other Department member(s) reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
  - c. Speech which conflicts with the Vision Statement and Mission of the Department and/or the ability of Department members to perform their duties.
  - d. Posting any of the following types of criminal justice information:
    - (1) Confidential, sensitive, or copyrighted information to which you have access due to your employment with the Department.

- (2) Data from criminal or administrative investigations including photographs, videos, or audio recordings.
  - (3) Photographs of suspects, arrestees, or evidence. A member's personal cell phone will be recovered for evidentiary purposes should it be discovered that it contains photographs related to any investigation.
  - (4) Personal statements about **any** investigation; including comments related to pending investigations and/or prosecutions.
7. The use of Department computers by members to access social media is prohibited without express written permission by the member's Bureau Commander or designee.

**B. Department Authorized Use of Social Media**

1. The Department authorizes the use of social media as an instrument for; but not limited to:
  - a. Community outreach efforts.
  - b. Problem-solving.
  - c. Investigation.
  - \*d. Crime prevention & Enforcement
  - e. Recruiting.
  - f. Employment efforts; such as advertising employment positions as well as volunteer positions.
  - g. Offering training opportunities.
2. All Department related social media sites or pages shall be approved in writing by the Chief of Police or designee.
3. The Media Unit will manage the content of Department social media sites.
4. Members seeking to represent the Department via social media outlets shall obtain express permission through their chain-of-command, prior to engaging in such activity.
5. If approval is granted, members will properly identify themselves as members of this Department.

**NOTE:** In instances where proper identification as a member of this Department poses a risk to officer safety or may

impede the progress of a criminal investigation, members should include such information in their request

6. Members use of personally owned devices to manage approved social media activities during the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission by the member's commander or designee.
7. When engaging in Department-authorized social media networking, members shall not under any circumstances:
  - a. Make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or any comments concerning pending prosecutions, internal investigations, or litigation.
  - b. Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos of Department training activities, investigations, or any other work-related assignment, without the specific and express written permission of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
  - c. Conduct political activities or private business.
8. Pre-Employment use of social media.
  - a. The Department has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
  - b. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of any existing laws, procedures, or regulations.
  - c. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
  - d. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.
  - e. The commander or designee should develop a written process to be followed for investigations during pre-employment.

#### C. Personal Use of Social Media

1. When engaging in personal use of social media, members shall not post any text, photograph, audio, video, illustration, or any other multimedia file related to, or depicting any of the following:
  - a. Current, past, or pending Departmental investigations, litigation, or business.

- b. Criminal or civil proceeding pertaining to or arising from any matter involving the Department, including allegations of misconduct.
  - \*c. Poses in a manner that brings discredit to a member or the Department with (actual or simulated), alcohol, cash, drugs, or drug paraphernalia. This list is not all inclusive.
  - \*d. Displays of sign language commonly referred to as "Gang signs."
  - e. Brandishing of tactical instruments in a manner that brings discredit to a member or the Department, including but not limited to, firearms, baton, OC spray, CEW (conducted electrical weapon), and mechanical restraints.
  - f. Department artwork and/or logos unless approval is granted through the chain of command.
2. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching a member's testimony in criminal or civil proceedings.
  3. While using social media networks on or off duty, members will not knowingly associate or have any dealings with people engaged in or advocating unlawful activities. For further information refer to the written directive entitled, "Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct."
  4. Members who are, or may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification that would identify oneself as being a member of the Department.
  5. Members should be aware they may be subject to civil litigation for:
    - a. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
    - b. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
    - c. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
    - d. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

6. The Department does not sanction identifying oneself as a member of this department while on social networking sites. Members should use caution while doing so as it may pose safety concerns to the member or the member's friends and family.
  7. Members are further cautioned not to post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as an officer or member of this Department. Officers who are, or may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
  8. Members should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that the personal information posted on such sites is protected.
  9. Members should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public on-line forum may be accessed by the Department at any time without prior notice.
- D. Members are subject to discipline up to and including termination for violations of this written directive.
- E. Reporting Violations

Any member becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provisions of this policy shall notify their supervisor immediately for follow-up action.



Stacey Graves  
Chief of Police

Adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners this 17<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2025.



Dawn M. Cramer  
Board President

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