



# ***SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY***

***OCTOBER 2, 2014***

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## **Purpose:**

Anderson Township has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the Township on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the establishment and use by Anderson Township of social media sites as a means of conveying Anderson Township information to its citizens, businesses, patrons, guests, visitors, etc. The intended purpose behind establishing a social media presence for Anderson Township is to disseminate information about Anderson Township’s policies, events, projects, facilities, programs, classes, activities, and other functions.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is understood to be content created by individuals or entities, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of social media include but are not limited to Facebook, Pinterest, blogs, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For purposes of this policy, “comments” include information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communicative content posted on an Anderson Township social media site.

## **Goals:**

Anderson Township’s use of social media allows the Township to:

1. Help achieve strategic goals.
2. Monitor and respond to hot topics and emerging issues quickly.
3. Proactively share stories to address current issues and projects.
4. Expand communication tools with a vast distribution system for content, while broadening and engaging new audiences.
5. Encourage citizen participation, strengthen our democracy, and support a civic culture.
6. Increase transparency of government.
7. Listen to residents, businesses and customers, enabling the Township to improve services and practices.
8. Reach out to the conversation, rather than waiting for it to come to us.

## **General Policy:**

The following general policies apply to Anderson Township’s use of social media:

1. The establishment and use by the Anderson Township of social media sites are subject to approval by the Township Administrator, or his/her designees. All Anderson Township social media sites shall be administered by Anderson Township’s Management Team, and it shall be made clear that they are maintained by Anderson Township. Employees representing the Township through these social media sites must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the Township and in accordance with all Township policies. Anderson Township will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.

2. Each Anderson Township social networking site shall include an introductory statement which clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the blog and/or social network site and a link to the Township's Social Media policy and Anderson Township or Anderson Center website.
3. Wherever possible, social media sites should link back to the official Anderson Township or Anderson Center website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct Township business. Anderson Township's website at [www.andersontownship.org](http://www.andersontownship.org) will remain the Township's primary and predominant Internet presence for official information and contains a use disclaimer.
4. A representative from Anderson Township's Management Team and his/her designee will monitor content on the social media sites to ensure adherence to both the Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the Township.
5. Anderson Township reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. When applicable, comments on topics or issues not within the jurisdictional purview of Anderson Township may also be removed. A copy of any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by Anderson Township for no less than 30 days after it is removed and must include the time, date, and identity of the person who posted it, if available, as well as the time and date the item was restricted or removed.
6. These guidelines must be displayed to users of the social media outlets used by the Township or made available by hyperlink.
7. All social media sites maintained by the Anderson Township shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
8. Anderson Township is an entity of the State of Ohio and therefore, the Township's social media sites are subject to the Ohio Public Records Act. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to Township business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure. Anderson Township will not sell or release such information except as required by law.
9. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time.
10. Where appropriate, IT security policies shall apply to all social networking sites and articles.

**Comment Guidelines:**

1. As a public entity, Anderson Township must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on Anderson Township social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction without notice to the individual who made the comments:
  - a. Comments not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments;
  - b. Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and/or language;
  - c. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin;
  - d. Defamatory or personal attacks;
  - e. Threats to any person or organization;
  - f. Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
  - g. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
  - h. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
  - i. Encouragement of illegal activity;
  - j. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
  - k. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party.
2. A comment posted by a member of the public on any Anderson Township social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, Anderson Township, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of Anderson Township.

3. Anderson Township shall monitor its social media sites for comments requesting responses and for comments in violation of this policy.
4. When an Anderson Township employee responds to a comment in his/her capacity as an Anderson Township employee, the employee's name and title may be made available. No employee shall share personal information about himself or herself, or other Township employees, on any social media outlet maintained by the Township.
5. All comments posted to any Anderson Township Social Media sites are bound by that social media website's respective Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, and Anderson Township reserves the right to report any violation of the social media website Statement of Rights and Responsibilities with the intent of that website taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

### **Comment Guidelines for Staff:**

Anderson Township's Management Team members or his/her designee are responsible for regularly reviewing comments and posting feedback. The subject matter expert should be knowledgeable about the topic and able to answer questions about the subject that may be posed by the public. The following guidelines should be followed when posting comments to a social media site:

1. **Only discuss your expertise** - Make sure that you write and post about your area of expertise, as it relates to your position in the Township and that the information you provide is both factual and accurate. Write in the first person.
2. **Be transparent** - Your honesty, or dishonesty, will be quickly noticed in social media environments. When commenting about your work at Anderson Township, use your real name, identify that you work for the Township and be clear about your role.
3. **Perception is reality** - In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as an Anderson Township employee, you are creating perceptions about the Township. Be sure all content associated with you is consistent with our work and with the Township's mission, vision, values and expectations. In addition, be aware that when you post something on any site it is a reflection of you as an individual, your co-workers and the Township as a whole.
4. **Be judicious** - All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Don't publish anything you wouldn't want your mom, co-worker, clergy or supervisor to read!
5. **Your responsibility** - What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of the Township is not a right and it therefore needs to be taken seriously and treated with respect. When responding to a request or question, or stating information on behalf of the Township, be sure you're the right person in your department to be doing so.
6. **It's a conversation** - Talk to your reader like you'd talk to real people in professional situations. Avoid bureaucratic language, formal language or industry jargon. Don't be combative. Respond to a negative comment for others to see such "I'm sorry to hear that. I have direct message you to help find a solution."
7. **Use common sense** - If a request or response requires a formal reply, letter or phone call then do so. The social media venue may not always be the appropriate communication tool.
8. **Be open** - One of the great benefits of social media is the interaction between us (you) and our citizens. Take in ideas. Share relevant feedback and input with colleagues.
9. **Are you adding value?** - There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write content people will value. Communication should help our residents, employees and others in the region. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community.
10. **Did you screw up?** - If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction.
11. **If it gives you pause, pause** - If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure

out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you're still unsure, check with the Township Administrator. Ultimately, the decision about what you publish is yours - as is the responsibility. So be sure what you respond to you can deliver.

12. **Don't Write** - Do not write any content or postings that involve or are related to the following:
  - a. Harassing statements.
  - b. Anything which a person of reasonable sensitivities may find to be offensive.
  - c. Matters in litigation or otherwise in dispute, or that could be in the future.
  - d. Non-public information of any kind.
  - e. References to illegal or banned substances and narcotics unless for public educational purposes.
  - f. Pornographic, sexually-oriented, otherwise offensive or illegal materials.
  - g. Defamatory, libelous, offensive, or demeaning material. (Don't engage in a combative exchange).
  - h. Solicitation of business or business endorsements.
  - i. Comments supporting/opposing political campaigns/ballot questions.
  - j. Information that might compromise the safety or security of public buildings, individuals or activities.
  - k. Disparaging/threatening comments about or related to anyone.
  - l. Personal, sensitive or confidential information of any kind about yourself or others.

### **Employee Use:**

Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships within the Anderson Township workplace, impair working relationships of Anderson Township, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony, or natively affect the public perception of Anderson Township. Employees are cautioned that speech, on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties (that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities) is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may be form the basis for discipline if deemed detriments to Anderson Township.

### **Disclosure:**

Employees have no personal privacy right in any communication or document created, received, or stored on social media applications. The Township reserves the right to monitor or to otherwise access the computer network to read and/or delete any communication or document in the computer network.

### **Violations:**

As specifically noted herein, and in general, violations of any guidelines listed above may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination as outlined in the Anderson Township Employee Handbook. If necessary, the Township will advise appropriate legal authorities of any illegal activities.

### **Contact Us:**

If you have any questions or concerns about the Anderson Township Social Media Policy or its implementation, or if you find incorrect information or are interested in seeking permission that falls outside of the guidelines above, please contact the Anderson Township Administrator at (513) 688-8400 or [info@andersontownship.org](mailto:info@andersontownship.org).

*Special thanks to the City of Montgomery, Ohio, the City of Mason, Ohio, and the Hamilton County (Ohio) Sheriff's Office, for providing a guide for the development of this policy for Anderson Township.*