800 SSW CAMPUS LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

800.1 Social Events Accessibility Policy


800.2 Using Social Media in Professional & Educational Endeavors

Social media offers quick and effective ways to stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues. It is vibrant and immediate. It also offers many ways to make new connections and has been widely used to promote political advocacy and social justice. Social media can be a valuable part of professional and personal activities, but must be used thoughtfully and in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics (2008), within the confines of agency policies, the policies of the Smith College School for Social Work, and all local, state and federal laws.

When used in relation to one’s professional activities, social media deserves some careful consideration. There are legal risks, ethical risks and pragmatic risks along with social media’s many merits. Be mindful that once information is posted on social media it may be impossible to delete. The technology for capturing online information is already well developed. You may not be able to retract or correct any information you post - forever. Recent newspaper reports indicate that employers are increasingly checking job applicants’ social media sites and using the data they find for formal and informal decision-making. Both your personal and professional information may be checked by employers and others.

First, discussion or disclosure of client information without documented client consent is prohibited by law and institutional policies. Federal HIPPA regulations, state licensure and practice laws and agency policies all prohibit disclosure of client information to others not directly charged with the client’s care. Professional advice should never be offered outside an agency or practice setting. Social workers should always practice in their areas of competence in defined relationships to clients (NASW Code of Ethics, Section 104).

Second, social work professional ethics also prohibit discussion of client information outside of direct work activities. It is inappropriate to refer to clients, client situations, supervisors or field agencies on social media regardless of efforts to restrict or limit access to the information. The NASW Code of Ethics, Section 1.07 (i) states that "Social workers should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants." Social media are effectively public or semipublic locations. The Code also states that "(k) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients when responding to requests from members of the media." Even restricted access social media sites may be viewed as media outlets. If you are speaking for an agency or group, (and only ever with explicit written permission and direction from that group) you should use their name to be transparent to other users. Only use your institutional affiliation when you are making professional postings, never for personal ones.

Third, the NASW Code of Ethics, Section 2.01 states that: "(a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues, and (b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals". Postings on social media about other professionals and about professional matters should be respectful, fair, accurate, and without undue criticism, including field agencies and their personnel. Your colleagues deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect as social worker treat our clients. Hasty social media postings may violate these standards, make the evidence of such an infraction widely known, and may be difficult or impossible to undo.

Agencies and institutions have the authority to ask social media organizations to refuse, or to terminate, social media groups that use their institutional names. The reputation and social ‘face’ of an institution may be enhanced or undermined by social media sites, and thus these institutions have rights to limit how their names and images are used. Many names and images are copyrighted or trademarked.

Finally, any academic process or information that is considered confidential should not be shared publicly on social media. This includes, but is not limited to, academic review proceedings or information about other student’s academic performance.

Failing to use professional judgment when using social media may harm you, colleagues and clients. Professional conduct on social media deserves appropriate care. Failing to meet the policies of Smith School for Social Work, laws, agency policies, NASW Code of Ethics and can lead to consultation, review and potentially dismissal from the program. It may also lead to external actions through professional sanction or legal suit. Use social media wisely and with care when it has any link to your professional activities.

800.3 Religious Accommodation (formerly Pref.)

Students in an educational institution who, because of their religious beliefs, are unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study or work requirement which they may have missed because of that absence, provided that the make-up examination or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon the school. No fee of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to students this opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to students availing themselves of the provision of this section.

800.4 Smith College School for Social Work Policy on Alcohol

No alcohol shall be allowed in the classroom.

800.5 Communications from the School

Important information will be communicated to you via their Smith email account. It is the student’s responsibility to check this account on a regular basis; students will be held accountable for this information. Please note that the school will use this account exclusively; no personal email accounts will be used. Students should be sure to monitor this account regularly.
800.6 CSWE Curriculum Policy Statement
Council on Social Work Education: Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards