



Social Media Use Policy

as of September 8, 2026

I. PURPOSE

Harnett County recognizes social media as an essential communication tool for providing timely, accurate, and accessible information to residents, businesses, visitors, employees, and community partners. Official County social media accounts are used to share information about County services, programs, initiatives, meetings, events, emergency communications, and other matters of public interest. This policy establishes standards and guidance for employees who manage official County social media accounts or whose personal social media use may affect the County. It is intended to ensure that County communications are professional, accessible, secure, legally compliant, and consistent with Harnett County's mission, values, and brand while protecting the integrity and reputation of the organization. This policy applies to all Harnett County departments and employees. Departments shall not establish separate social media policies or additional requirements unless reviewed by the Legal & Risk Management Department and approved by the County Manager.

II. DEFINITION

Social media includes digital platform tools that allow users to create, share, and engage with content. Through social media, County departments can create, organize, edit, combine, and share content. Social media encompasses many forms, including social-networking, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, and podcasts. Some examples of these social media forms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Next Door, and LinkedIn.

III. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Harnett County respects employees' rights to use personal social media and does not discourage employees from self-publishing, self-expression, and public conversation and does not discriminate against employees who use these mediums. However, the County recognizes that these types of tools can sometimes blur the line between professional and personal lives. Therefore, employees are reminded that, as representatives of the County or their department, the rules and guidelines which are stated in this Policy must be taken into consideration when participating in these services at any time, but particularly when identifying themselves as employees of the County or when context might lead to that conclusion. Above all, employees should understand that information put out through social media should be considered public

regardless of whether the account is public or private and reflects both upon you as an individual and upon the County in your role as an employee.

- Employees should remember that information shared online can be copied, screenshot, and redistributed beyond its original audience and may be available indefinitely for public consumption regardless of any attempts to erase or edit comments/posts.
- Employees must never disclose confidential, proprietary, or non-public information obtained through their employment with Harnett County. Information that is not intended for public release should not be shared on personal social media platforms. If you have signed a confidentiality agreement, you are expected to follow it. Please act responsibly with the information with which you are entrusted.
- Personal social media activity should not be conducted in a way that would lead a reasonable person to believe the employee is speaking on behalf of or representing the County unless specifically authorized to do so.
 - When in doubt, add a disclaimer to your social networking profile, personal blog, or other online presences that clearly states that the opinions or views expressed are yours alone and do not represent the views of Harnett County or your department.
 - Example: "The views expressed on this page are my own and do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Harnett County or the departments within."
- Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally online and avoid content or behavior that could undermine public trust, damage the reputation of Harnett County, interfere with County operations, or violate County policies, including those related to harassment, discrimination, confidentiality, or workplace conduct.
- Employees may not post the name, trademark, or logo of the County, company-privileged information, including copyrighted information or company-issued documents, or photographs of other employees, residents, vendors, or suppliers taken in their capacity as County employees.
- The County permits very limited personal social networking during the workday. Social networking during the workday is viewed as similar in nature to receiving a personal phone call and thus should be of a reasonably limited duration. Social networking shall not interfere in any way with job responsibilities. Supervisors have the right and ability to further restrict social networking at work, as appropriate, and nothing in this policy limits or restricts the County's rights and/or ability to monitor or modify use of County electronic communication equipment. Furthermore, employees have no expectation of privacy while using the County's technology resources for any purpose, including authorized social media. The County monitors all such use and may withdraw content deemed to be inappropriate, outside the scope of an employee's authority, or in violation of County policy as determined by the Department Director, Human Resources, and/or the County Manager's office.

IV. OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Account Creation and Managing of a Department Social Media

Official social media department accounts may only be created with approval from the Department Director and Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO must review and approve all social media accounts before they are created and made public. The PIO will maintain administrative access to all official accounts.

Use by Employees (Official Department Accounts)

1. Authorization

- Employees who wish to establish and/or maintain an official departmental social media site, blog, page, or other account in their official capacity as County staff must complete the Social Media Authorization Form. A copy of the form must be submitted to the employee's Department Director and the County's Public Information Officer for approval prior to creating social media site or publishing content. If an authorization request is approved, the PIO will create the account. For any existing accounts, the PIO will provide access to the authorized staff. The PIO must be listed as an administrator or owner on all County social media accounts.
- Unofficial accounts may not be created representing County programs, initiatives, or services without authorization from the PIO.
- The PIO will also discuss social media training and the Social Media Comment policy guidelines that employees are required to follow.

2. Account Security

- The Public Information Officer, the Department Director, and authorized employees within the department will have access to the login and password information for the account.
- Accounts must use an official County email address. Account passwords must be secure. The PIO or IT Director shall have the authority to change passwords. If a password is changed, the PIO will notify the authorized users. If a department changes the password, they must notify the PIO. Access must be removed immediately when employees transfer, change roles, or separate from County employment.

3. Authorized Representation

- An employee should not speak on behalf of the County or their department unless authorized to do so. Authorized employees are expected to speak respectfully and professionally about the County and County-related matters and to identify themselves and their role with the County when speaking in any such capacity.
- As designated social media representatives, employees may not publish content to any official website or social media application that is unrelated to subjects associated with the County or that is not relevant to citizens.
- Department Directors, or designees, and the PIO are responsible for determining who is authorized to use social media on behalf of the department, and for designating appropriate access levels. Department directors, or designees, will be

responsible to the County Manager and/or HR in the event of a problem. If an employee's authorization has been revoked, the Department Director should notify the PIO immediately.

- Employees authorized to post on social media should be aware that they serve as a representative of the County. When posting, employees must be transparent and honest, speak within their area of expertise, and use credible un-biased sources. Employees should never repeat rumors, post about internal personnel matters, or post confidential information.

Branding and Accessibility Requirements

- All accounts must follow the Harnett County branding standards (logo, colors, naming, and standards identified in the Brand and Communications Guide).
 - **Profile Picture.** County profiles should upload the County or departmental logo as their profile picture. It is important to use the County/departmental logo to demonstrate authenticity.
 - **Profile Contact Information.** Contact information should display an official County email address, include something about being the "official account", provide a link to the County or department website, and include a physical/ mailing address as well as phone number.
- All County social media content must be accessible to people with disabilities in accordance with the Department of Justice Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations for digital accessibility. At minimum, the following practices are required:
 - Providing alternative text for images and graphics or flyers
 - Using captioning for videos
 - Use plain language and avoid acronyms and jargon
 - Ensure language is clear and readable
 - Ensure adequate color contrast is being used
 - Avoid posting critical information only within images
 - Use captions or descriptive text for static graphics

Content Standards

- Employees are expected to follow copyright, fair use, acceptable use, and financial disclosure laws when using online communications, as well as the appropriate Records Retention Schedules for any information posted on social media. The unlawful use of copyrighted materials, unfounded or derogatory statements, misrepresentation, or the disclosure of confidential information is strictly prohibited.
- Employees should not cite or reference County contractors or suppliers without their approval. Once approval is granted, be sure to include a link back to the source. Photographs of citizens and employees should not be used if the citizen or employee requests that it not be used.
- AI-generated content must be reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness before posting.

- Whenever possible, departments should link to official County webpages or press releases for additional details.

Public Comment & Moderation

- All department pages **must link** the [Social Media Comment Policy](#) that is found on our harnett.org website to the account bio on social media. The County reserves the right to moderate content in accordance with these guidelines.
 - To keep our pages safe, respectful, and helpful for everyone, the County may hide, delete, or report comments or posts, without notice, that violate the Social Media Comment Policy. Record Retention for comments that violate the policy are identified below in the Records Retention section.
- Official County accounts should not comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" private citizen profiles from within their County social networking page. However, official County accounts are permitted to comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" content on private citizen profiles that is directly related to community service, outreach in the County, or positive County business.
- Official County accounts should not comment on, "follow," "like," or "share" any political groups or figures' profiles nor make any political comments/postings on the County social media site.
- Employees must refrain from participating in arguments with social profile visitors. Responses should be respectful and informative rather than based in opinion. Comments/postings that warrant a response should be referred to the appropriate County employee or department, who may then address the commenter's issue off of social media.
- Each department is responsible for monitoring postings, and taking appropriate action, when necessary, to protect general site visitors from inappropriate or technically harmful information. Comments/postings must be monitored daily.

Record Retention

- Social media content including posts, comments, and messages are public records.
- The County uses archiving software to keep records of all department social media posts.
- Authorized County social media users are responsible for documenting blocked, hidden, or removed public comments/postings from County social media sites. Authorized users must take a screenshot of the comment/posting and place it in an email addressed to the Department Director, or designee, and the PIO, along with the reason the specific content violated one of the exclusions identified in the Social Media Comment Policy. A record must be retained for items removed from social media.

V. VIOLATIONS

Reporting Violations

The County requests and strongly urges employees to report any violations or possible or perceived violations of this policy to the Public Information Officer along with Department Directors, Human Resources, or the County Manager's office.

Discipline for Violations

The County will investigate and respond to all reports of violations or perceived violations of this policy. Violation of the policies herein may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

County of Harnett Social Media Use Policy

UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF POLICY

I, _____, have received/had an opportunity to review a copy of the County of Harnett Social Media Use Policy. I have read the policy in its entirety and have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about it. Furthermore, I fully understand and agree to comply with this policy. I also accept that it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my supervisor or Human Resources staff if at any time I am unclear about the policy's requirements. I fully understand that failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee's Printed Name

Employee's Signature

Date