

*"Promoting equality before the law,  
enhancing community safety,  
and furthering access to justice  
through public information."*



# 1branch voice

**communications  
strategic plan**  
***social media***



## **Social Media Handbook**

*Rev. 3.27.2020*

### **Introduction**

In our digital society, social media is a rapidly evolving means of communication and engagement. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn allow the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation of the Nebraska Judicial Branch to communicate directly with the communities we serve, exchanging news and information in real-time.

Through social media, people and groups can create, organize, edit, discuss, combine and share content. It is critical for the Branch to engage with people in the ways used by the communities we serve.

By engaging on the same social media platforms as the public, the Branch can make sure they hear the public's feedback, guide the conversation, and help shape the public perception of official Branch activities, policies and priorities.

#### **1. Policy Statement**

The Nebraska Judicial Branch social media plan is implemented to further the provision of justice through a system of impartial, fair, and accessible courts and related services. It is designed to further our goals of achieving community safety, promoting the general welfare and encouraging civility among people. The Nebraska Judicial Branch social media presence is used to strengthen communication with the citizens and government of the State of Nebraska, bring accountability to the public, provide and promote access to swift and fair justice, protection of children and vulnerable adults, and highlight our efforts for the enhancement of community safety.

#### **2. Purpose**

For the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation of the Nebraska Judicial Branch (AOCP) to continue to provide accurate, timely information to residents, visitors, partners, journalists and other stakeholders, it is imperative that social media be integrated into the AOCP's overarching communications strategy.

The Branch's official website, [supremecourt.nebraska.gov](http://supremecourt.nebraska.gov), will remain the AOCP's primary means of digital communication. AOCP-sponsored social media accounts will complement and enhance the AOCP's long-established web presence.

This handbook, which will be updated to reflect current conditions and best practices, establishes guidelines for the creation, oversight, maintenance and documentation of social media accounts used by the AOCP.

#### **3. Applicability and Scope**

The standards outlined in this handbook apply to all Departments and employees in the Nebraska Judicial Branch.

All other Nebraska Judicial Branch policies, provisions and rules, as well as state and federal laws, apply to social media, even if not specifically mentioned in this handbook.

#### 4. Definitions

**Authorized agent:** Refers to any AOCB employee authorized to post social media content on behalf of the Branch or Department, including but not limited to public information officers (PIOs), communications managers and program leads.

**Brand standards:** Refers to the branding guidelines that govern use of the Nebraska Judicial branch seal, logo, nameplate, color scheme and visual identity.

**Communications Division:** Consists of the Deputy Administrator for Operations, the Assistant Deputy for Operations, the Public Information Officer and the Web Design and Communications Coordinator.

**Content:** Refers to any posts, writings, material, documents, photographs, graphics, videos, links or other information created, posted, distributed or transmitted via social media.

**Departments:** Refers to all Judicial Branch departments under the authority of the AOCB.

**Desktop applications:** Refers to third-party applications used by authorized agents assist with managing social media accounts, often in a dashboard format, by providing scheduling and other features.

**Mobile apps:** Refers to technologies that can be downloaded and accessed via smartphones and tablets, in order to provide mobile publishing and account management abilities to authorized agents.

**Social Media Action Plan (SMAP):** Refers to the official document that departments are required to complete when proposing a new AOCB-sponsored social media account.

**Social media:** Refers to digital platforms and tools used to engage with residents and other stakeholders, share timely information, gather public feedback and share the AOCB's story.

**Social Media Team:** Chaired by the Web Design and Communications Coordinator and includes representatives from each Department with ownership in, or contributing to, a Branch social media platform.

#### 5. Roles and Responsibilities

**Communications Division will:**

- Coordinate a process for reviewing all social media accounts, projects and plans.
- Coordinate a process for reviewing, approving and maintaining a list of authorized agents, which will include usernames and passwords in use for the conduct of official AOCB business.
- Provide expert review and authorization of social media tools and websites prior to their use in the conduct of official AOCB business.
- Ensure that there is clear direction to authorized agents about their responsibilities, social media best practices, and authorized social media tools and websites.

- Maintain a publicly available list of all active AOCB-sponsored social media accounts.
- Recommend social media accounts for use by departments, and review new types of social media platforms and tools for effectiveness, efficiencies and security.
- Work directly with divisions and programs to coordinate social media strategies and tactics, including digital communications for specific events and programs.
- Coordinate the use of centralized social media resources and content, as well as interdepartmental use of social media during issues affecting the Judicial Branch.
- Monitor issues, trends and risks in social media, and provide training materials and workshops for authorized agents that use social media regularly.
- Train employees on best practices and implementation on an ongoing basis.
- Manage the program for documenting authorized agents, account logins and passwords for the purpose of emergency management.
- Set standards for measuring effectiveness of social media, working with departments to establish reporting techniques and success metrics.
- Consider records retention and public records issues whenever implementing social media.

**Social Media Team Members will:**

- Oversee and manage social media accounts in use by authorized agents in conduct of official AOCB business.
- Provide the Communications Division with up-to-date lists of social media accounts, account logins and passwords for the purpose of emergency management and account security.
- Change social media passwords every 90 days per Communications Division policy, or immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave AOCB employment.
- Uphold brand standards, and AOCB and department values, when representing a department on social media in conduct of official AOCB business.
- Monitor accounts during the standard workweek, flagging concerns and escalating issues when appropriate.
- Work with the Communications Division to employ best practices for social media use.
- Monitor and measure social media accounts, analyzing effectiveness and making recommendations to the Communications Division for continuous improvement.

## **6. Implementation & Administration**

The Communications Division determines, under the Nebraska Judicial Branch Social Media Policy, and these procedures, how the AOCB's social media resources will be designed, implemented and managed.

All official AOCB social media accounts must be set up as organizational or business accounts, rather than individual or personal accounts.

In accordance with the Nebraska Judicial Branch Social Media Policy, the Communications

Division must maintain a current listing of all active social media accounts representing AOCB.

All administrators of AOCB social media accounts must access the accounts with a government-issued email address, such as nebraska.gov, not a personal email address, for security and records retention purposes.

### **Approved Platforms**

Approved platforms appropriate for official AOCB social media engagement include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Others as they receive approval and meet AOCB requirements. The approval process will flow from the social media team, to the Deputy Administrator for Operations, to the Court Administrator, by way of a formal written proposal.

The social media landscape is constantly changing, with frequent additions of features and changes to the algorithms the platforms use to determine which posts receive priority.

Over time, the list of platforms appropriate for official AOCB engagement may change due to shifts in audience, accessibility and features, and/or a platform's popularity and usage.

To submit a new or additional platform for consideration, please contact the Communications Division.

### **Creating a Social Media Account**

Before requesting an AOCB-sponsored social media account, prospective authorized agents must have approval from their Deputy Director (or their designee) to use social media on behalf of their division and the AOCB.

Once the Deputy Director (or their designee) has approved the request, authorized agents should contact the Communications Division and complete a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) in order to create a social media account proposal.

Only social media platforms approved by the Communications Division, in consultation with executive leadership (Deputy Director for Operations, and State Court Administrator), may be used on behalf of the AOCB. The Communications Division will retain password and login information for all AOCB-sponsored social media accounts.

### **Social Media Action Plan**

For all new social media accounts, prospective administrators must submit a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) to the digital engagement manager.

Each administrator must have a SMAP on record for official AOCB social media accounts. Please use the SMAP as a conversation starter to help your teams determine audiences, choose a platform, set goals and success metrics, etc. for social media engagement.

Departments should have a broad communications plan that aligns with the vision and mission of the AOC. When planning to launch new social media accounts, departments will work with the digital engagement manager to address key questions, including:

- What is your vision for digital engagement?
- Who is your target audience?
- Why is the proposed social media platform the right fit?
- Do you have the resources to maintain the account in accordance with AOC and industry best practices?
- How would the proposed account help the AOC to advance access to justice and create safer communities?

If approved, new accounts must be set up to "follow" all other AOC-sponsored accounts on a particular platform.

The SMAP shall help the Communication Division determine, at a minimum:

- How, or in what respect, there is a clear benefit of specific stakeholder outreach that is not already met by other AOC-sponsored social media accounts; and
- The long-term sustained ability of the prospective account administrator to create high-quality content, and manage the day-to-day engagement as outlined in these procedures; and
- How the division or program has developed an effective strategy to maintain the AOC-sponsored social media account, including who is able to access and post, and risk monitoring.

The Communications Division is the decision-making authority for approval or denial of any request for new AOC-sponsored social media accounts.

All administrators of AOC-sponsored social media accounts must access the accounts with a nebraska.gov email address, not a personal email address, for security and records retention purposes.

### **Existing Social Media Accounts**

Departments using social media accounts created prior to the publication of this handbook shall work with the digital engagement manager to update the SMAP on record in a timely fashion.

Authorized agents who administer AOC-sponsored social media accounts are required to regularly monitor the account to respond to comments and determine whether the comments or any content placed on the site by the public is inappropriate under these procedures.

### **Deactivating a Social Media Account**

If a decision is made by the Communications Division or the authorized agent to deactivate an AOC-sponsored social media account, the following actions shall occur:

- Contact the Communications Division to assist in preserving all content.
- Set a timeline for deactivating the account.

- Develop a farewell message to post on the account that includes when the account will be closed and where followers can go for information in the future.
- Confirm to the Communications Division once the account has been deactivated that the site is now completely deactivated and no longer a channel for public communication.
- Consult with the Communications Division to determine whether to protect the account name by keeping it active to prevent use of the AOC's name for improper purposes. If a decision is made to protect the account name, take all necessary action to do so.

Considerations for deciding whether to deactivate an AOC-sponsored social media account may include, but are not be limited to:

- It is no longer needed to accomplish a Branch goal
- It does not align with the AOC's vision for digital engagement
- It does not comply with these procedures
- It is not currently being used or is being underutilized with no original posts for at least 60 days
- It is not being monitored

### **Centralized Social Media Assets**

Unless a business case is made and a SMAP is approved for a separate social media account, AOC-sponsored social media content should be coordinated through the AOC's centralized assets:

- @NEJudicialBranch is the Branch's flagship Facebook account
- @NEJudicial is the Branch's flagship Twitter account Use of these

assets is governed by the following guidelines:

- In emergencies, working in concert with the provisions of the Continuity of Operations Plan, the flagship accounts serve as the primary means of communication with the public.
- Divisions should contact the Communications Division to coordinate posts to the assets.
- Posts to these assets shall not serve as a replacement for postings, notifications and public hearings as required by law or Branch policy, procedures, or rules.

## **7. Standards**

These standards are designed for authorized agents working to inform the widest audience possible by disseminating content via social media platforms. Content may be time-sensitive, such as in emergency incidents, or related to marketing or promoting AOC information, updates, events, etc., as well as topics with a broad community interest or items deemed to be in the best interests of the AOC.

These standards may need to be updated as social media platforms change features and policies.

Authorized agents with social media or blogging responsibilities are not allowed to post information or comments on AOC-sponsored accounts that are critical, false or disparaging, or could be damaging to the AOC's reputation.

To help prevent errors, official communications should be fact-checked before being posted to social media accounts. If a factual error is made, it should be corrected as soon as possible. Corrections

should be up-front and as timely as possible.

Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.

In order to avoid terms of service violations, any authorized agent implementing social media on behalf of the AOCP shall consult and review the platform's current terms of service before proceeding.

If a social media platform's terms of service contradict AOCP policy, the Communications Division should be made aware of it and a decision should be made about whether use of such platform is appropriate.

### **Profile Names**

Communications Division must approve all social media display names and account URLs.

An acceptable name and URL must clearly and concisely identify the department, division or program. Accounts shall not be named in a way that it might be confused with any other AOCP or non-AOCP entity.

### **Images**

Profile images must reflect the official department or Branch logo to clearly identify the account to users and maintain consistent branding, exceptions may be granted by the Communications Division if a relevant business case is determined upon the appeal of an authorized agent.

Cover photos must be relevant to the department's work, comply with all relevant AOCP policies and follow current best practices.

Images must be of sufficient resolution and size to not appear pixelated or grainy when displayed.

Refer to the AOCP Branding Guidelines to ensure the AOCP maintains a consistent image on social media.

### **Content**

A link to the department's landing page within the Branch's website at [supremecourt.nebraska.gov](http://supremecourt.nebraska.gov) be the main website link included in the account profile settings.

All accounts allowing commenting must link to a webpage with the following commenting policy:

The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation welcomes dialogue with the public. Please be aware your comments are subject to public disclosure laws and we may screen for the following:

- Potentially libelous comments.
- Obscene or explicit comments.
- Hateful or mean-spirited comments.
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- Plagiarized material, or material that violates intellectual property rights.
- Private, personal information published without consent.
- Commercial promotions or spam.



- Comments that are off-topic or that link to material that is off-topic.
- Comments that embed images from external sources.
- Comments that violate any law.

If you have any questions about our comments policies, please don't hesitate to ask. Comments will be screened periodically during standard business days.

## **8. Use of Social Media Professional**

### **Use**

Only authorized agents may post content to social media accounts on behalf of an AOCP entity. Non-Judicial Branch employees should consult their department's communications policy for more information on social media use within their department.

Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information acquired by way of your official position with the Branch. This restriction applies whether the information is disclosed on professional or personal social media accounts, or by any other method.

Do not use personal social media accounts for work purposes. This is to facilitate compliance with public records law and protect information on your personal accounts from public disclosure.

It is never appropriate to post a personal opinion online, commit your department to a course of action, or discuss areas outside of your expertise.

Hourly employees should not work on social media after hours without prior approval. This is considered overtime, and failure to obtain prior authorization may be cause for corrective action.

Inappropriate use of social media in violation of these professional and personal guidelines can be grounds for corrective action, including disciplinary action.

### **Personal Use**

Personal usage of social media is governed by the existing AOCP Acceptable Use Policy

Do not use a work email address when using social media in personal capacities. For example, do not create a personal Facebook or Twitter account using your nebraska.gov email address.

If you identify yourself as an AOCP employee when conducting personal social media activities, consider stating in your profile that your comments are not representative of the Judicial Branch.

Regardless of whether you specify on your personal social media accounts that you work for the Branch, your employment with the Branch is public record. Be mindful that whenever you discuss issues online, whether in a personal or professional capacity, your comments can be connected to your employment with the Branch.

Nothing in this handbook is meant to prevent an employee from exercising their right to make a complaint of discrimination or other workplace misconduct, engage in or express an opinion on a matter of public concern that does not unduly disrupt AOCP operations.

## **9. Engaging with the Public Comments**

The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation welcomes community engagement and feedback. Per the AOCP's Comments Policy, comments are subject to public disclosure laws and will be screened for the following:

- Potentially libelous comments.
- Obscene or explicit comments.
- Hateful or mean-spirited comments.
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language.
- Plagiarized material, or material that violates intellectual property rights.
- Private, personal information published without consent.
- Commercial promotions or spam.
- Comments that are off-topic or that link to material that is off-topic.
- Comments that embed images from external sources.

Some platforms, such as Nextdoor and YouTube, allow account administrators to limit comments. Authorized agents ~~shall use this feature judiciously and only after consulting with the Communications Division for authorization~~ will utilize this feature to disable comments.

All platforms will have commenting restricted to the maximum ability. For example, Facebook does not disallow commenting on individual posts, but posting by individuals to pages, and sharing of "stories" must be disabled.

### **Blocking**

As a general rule, authorized agents shall not block individuals from interacting with AOCP-sponsored social media accounts.

If an authorized agent feels it is necessary to block an individual from interacting with AOCP-sponsored social media accounts, consult with the Communications Division.

In determining whether an individual will be blocked, the digital engagement manager may consider, among other factors, whether blocking is allowed under these procedures, applicable laws, the nature of the incident on the AOCP-sponsored social media account that prompted review, whether blocking would entail viewpoint discrimination, and whether other actions could be attempted to stop or prevent further violations without blocking an individual.

If an individual is blocked, documentation must be kept, such as screenshots of the data that prompted the block and the reason for the block.

### **Privacy Policy**

As a government entity, the AOCP conducts public business and its records are generally available for public review. Nevertheless, the AOCP is committed, to the extent allowable by law, to protect and secure your personal information contained in AOCP records.

Third-party social media platforms maintain their own privacy policies. Refer to the individual platform's privacy policies for more information, as you are no longer on an AOCP website and are subject to the privacy policy and conditions of that platform.

## **10. Public Records**

Content published on AOCPS-sponsored social media accounts that relates to the conduct of government actions will be retained and managed by departments in compliance with state records retention and Nebraska record-keeping requirements.

The public may not be aware of the state's public records law, so departments should include language similar to the following on their social media accounts, where applicable:

- This is a Nebraska Judicial Branch government account. All content is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.

## **11. Security**

Departments must follow all AOCPS policies regarding data security.

Departments must change social media passwords every 90 days and immediately after the password or social media account accessed using the password has been, or is suspected of being, compromised.

Departments must also change passwords immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave AOCPS employment.

Do not use automated login options on social media accounts, such as Facebook's "Keep me logged in" feature. Additionally, if you use a third-party program manage passwords, make sure to configure the account so that you must log in each time you open a web browser, in order to prevent unauthorized access to AOCPS-sponsored social media accounts should a computer or digital device be compromised or stolen.

Government agencies' social media accounts are at risk and often the target of hacking and hijacking. Authorized agents with access to AOCPS-sponsored social media accounts must take proper measures to ensure Social Media Site security, including but not limited to:

- Enabling two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication;
- Not sharing access with those not approved for access;
- Periodically changing passwords, especially after a reported breach or leak of log-in credentials; and
- Not allowing those who are not authorized agents access without approval from the department.

Account access is at the discretion of the digital engagement manager and the department, and shall be detailed in the SMAP for new AOCPS-sponsored social media accounts.

## **12. Social Media Tools Desktop**

### **Applications**

Desktop applications, such as Buffer, offer a third-party solution to help manage social media accounts, often in a dashboard format.

As a best practice, authorized agents should not include professional and personal social media accounts in the same dashboard. This helps prevent the accidental posting of personal information from official AOCPS-sponsored social media accounts.

Authorized agents will use desktop applications to manage AOCB-sponsored social media pages, and they must use their nebraska.gov email address and a password that is unique to the application (not the same as their nebraska.gov email password).

All posts will be entered into the desktop application approval queue for review of the Communications Division before posting. Deviations from this procedure require the written approval of the Communications Division.

### **Mobile Apps**

Authorized agents shall use separate mobile apps for professional and personal use of social media to help prevent the accidental posting of personal information to AOCB-sponsored social media accounts.

Authorized agents shall use an AOCB-issued device to manage AOCB-sponsored social media accounts, rather than administering official accounts from personal devices.

