



KERN COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

Policies And Procedures

TITLE: Social Media Publishing			Article: 1412
APPROVED: William Dickinson, Chief Probation Officer			
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POLICY

It is the policy of the Kern County Probation Department to establish and enforce guidelines and protocols for the publishing of information via social media.

PURPOSE

The Kern County Probation Department recognizes the importance of building and maintaining its relationship with staff, clients, stakeholders, and the general public. In addition to press releases and media interviews, the development and application of social media is considered paramount to providing the public with relevant, accurate, and timely information. It is the intent of the Kern County Probation Department to provide this information in a professional manner and in accordance with laws governing public information and data practices. Communications by employees in an official agency role must comply with all laws related to trademark, copyright, software use, and confidentiality. Social media sites utilized for this purpose may include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

PROCEDURE

- I. The Chief Probation Officer shall designate who shall act as the Social Media Coordinator(s), who will:
 - A. Be responsible for the content published on the social media site;
 - B. Maintain relevant, accurate, and current information on the social media site;
 - C. Remain compliant with departmental and county policies, including related privacy and confidentiality; and
 - D. Appropriately exercise the authority to delete any public comments or photos that contain:
 1. Profanity, vulgar, or abusive language;
 2. Personal attacks or threats of any kind;
 3. Discriminatory or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, or religious groups, or sexual orientation;

4. Sensitive information, including information that could potentially compromise public safety or ongoing investigations;
5. Comments containing any Protected Health Information (PHI), Personal Information (PI), Personally Identifiable Information (PII), or other identifying information that could lead to a HIPAA violation;
6. Spam, including links to other non-sanctioned sites;
7. Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;
8. Engagement or endorsement of illegal activity;
9. Promotion or endorsement of any particular service, product, or political organization/candidate, or any public endorsement which could be considered a conflict of interest; and
10. Any infringement on copyrights, trademarks, or patents.

II. Each Division Director will designate a social media/public information liaison (liaison). The liaison will be responsible for collecting newsworthy events within the confines of policy, placing the information into the established format, and forwarding it to their Division Director or designee for proofing. The Division Director will forward the formatted release to the Social Media Coordinator e-mail group for publishing and dissemination.

- A. The following guidelines regarding formatting will be utilized by the employees of the Probation Department for general submissions:

Upon approval by the Division Director, the event information will, in a timely manner, be forwarded to the Social Media Coordinator e-mail group for vetting, proofing, formatting and publishing.

1. The information forwarded to the Social Media Coordinator for law enforcement releases will contain at minimum:
 - a. Adult arrestees' name and age (if applicable)
 - b. Division and Unit Involved
 - c. Circumstances of the crime including time and place of arrest (if applicable)
 - d. Photographs are encouraged to be included with the submission.
2. The information forwarded to the Social Media Coordinator for marketing releases will contain at minimum:
 - a. The date, time and location of the event.

- b. Division and Unit Involved.
- c. The nature and circumstances of the event
- d. Photographs are encouraged to be included with the submission.

III. Social Media posting on behalf of the Kern County Probation Department will adhere to the following guidelines:

- A. Information published on any social media sites related to departmental business must comply with established law and policy concerning confidentiality.
- B. Social media accounts administrated by the Kern County Probation Department shall comply with policy guidelines as set forth in Article 1411 "Social Networking Sites" regarding prohibited speech, expression, and conduct. In addition, social media accounts must not be used to transmit or store information for an unlawful or prohibited purpose, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - 1. Discrimination on the basis of sex, race, creed, color, gender, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability (sensory, mental, or physical), sexual orientation, or veteran status;
 - 2. Obscene materials, sexual content, or sexual harassment;
 - 3. Protected or private information, including Personal Health Information (PHI), Personal Identifier Information (PII), or any content containing client identifiers;
 - 4. Expression of any campaign, political, or religious beliefs; and
 - 5. Conduct for personal financial benefit or gain.
- C. All information published on social media sites shall comply with the Peace Officer Bill of Rights. If staff is requesting consideration under Gov't Code section 3307.5, they shall submit a written memo directly to their Division Director.

IV. Social Media Account Structure

The structure and content of Probation Department owned and operated social media accounts will be approved by the Chief Probation Officer or designee. Additionally, social media sites operated by the Department which allow for public comment, where possible, will display the following information:

- A. A notice which states: "Posted comments do not necessarily represent the views of the Kern County Probation Department."
- B. Department contact information, a link to the department website, and a notice which states, "This account is maintained by the Kern County Probation

Department.”

- C. A notice which states: “Posted comments are not actively monitored.” and “The Department reserves the right to remove comments at its discretion, including, but not limited to: obscenities, off-topic comments, personal attacks, any comments that jeopardize an ongoing investigation or prosecution, or that otherwise impair the Department’s ability to provide effective services to the community.”
- D. A notice which states: “Any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.”

V. Publishing Guidelines

A. Rubric

Potential submissions will be categorized based on their potential for problematic outcomes, including considerations based on civil liability, public relations, and potential for public outcry. The category will determine the level of authorization required to post the content. An initial determination of the submission’s category will be made by the Director of the division where the content originated. The following rubric will be utilized to determine which category a piece of content falls into:

Category 1:

The least problematic content where nothing could be construed as having the potential for negative implications to the Department. Examples include pictures of officers/employees at a non-controversial public event, action shots of officers in the field, or pictures of a JCO graduation ceremony. Nothing in the picture should show Personal Identifying Information (PII). No probationers should be depicted in the content or referenced in the narrative. This category is reserved for material so innocuous that any reasonable person would not find it offensive.

Category 2:

Identical to Category 1 except the content includes depictions of probationer(s).

Category 3:

Contains factual information which must be fact-checked prior to release; Or, contains potentially political or politicized information; Or, contains content which has the potential to expose the Department to civil liability; Or, the content contains depictions or a narrative which cannot, to a reasonable observer, be immediately categorized into Categories 1 or 2. Most media press releases fall into this category.

B. Authorization

The following employees are authorized to post content on social media sites on behalf of the Department:

Category 1:

The Social Media Coordinator, the Probation Supervisors assigned to the Professional Standards Unit, the Assistant Division Director and the Division Director of the Administrative Services Division, the Deputy Chiefs, and the Chief Probation Officer.

Category 2:

The Probation Supervisors assigned to the Professional Standards Unit, the Assistant Division Director and the Division Director of the Administrative Services Division, the Deputy Chiefs, and the Chief Probation Officer.

Category 3:

The Assistant Division Director and the Division Director of the Administrative Services Division, the Deputy Chiefs, and the Chief Probation Officer.

The Division Director of the Administrative Services Division, the Deputy Chiefs, and the Chief Probation officer have the sole discretion to designate an alternate employee to post content in their absence.