Social Media Guidelines for PTA Leaders and Members in California

Each PTA District, Council or Unit can create its own policies for members who use social media and identify themselves as PTA leaders or members. *The California State PTA Social Media Policy* **is included as an example.**

The California State PTA uses social media and encourages leaders at all levels to participate in an engaging and productive exchange. The community-based aspects of social media can benefit PTAs in reaching out to new audiences and engaging an existing base. However, use of social media carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist leaders and members in making responsible decisions about using social media, we have established the following guidelines:

Guidelines

For our purposes, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet – whether or not these channels are associated or affiliated with a PTA – Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online.

Leaders and members may associate themselves with the organization in different ways—explicitly – by stating in a profile or on a site a PTA title or involvement and/or implicitly—by posting photos, graphics or other information that identifies them as a PTA leader or member.

You speak for yourself but your actions reflect on the organization. Do not post confidential information, accusatory statements, or any defamatory information. **Be respectful, truthful, discreet and responsible no matter your privacy settings.**

Consider the following:

If your profile picture identifies you as PTA, be aware when posting comments on other sites, both public and private. Remember PTA's Noncommercial, Nonsectarian, Nonpartisan policies when posting on public sites (i.e., newspaper comments, public blogs, trade publications and other)

Privacy settings are no guarantee of privacy. Search engines and other technologies make it impossible to take something back once it's been posted. Screen shots, forwards and other technologies can spread messages quickly beyond your intended circle of friends or followers.

Mistakes happen. If they do, apologize.

Social Media Guidelines for PTAs in California

Best practices and guidelines are not inclusive and social media and situations change.

Guidelines and Best Practices for PTA social media sites:

All PTA social media posts must be respectful, truthful, discreet and responsible. Posts must be Noncommercial, Nonsectarian, Nonpartisan according to PTA policies.

Administering PTA Social Media Sites:

- Have at least two Administrators (Suggest: President & Communications Chair (or the like). Although the President is responsible for approving material, A PTA can have a communications plan with preapproved content and general guidelines. The president may appoint a social media person/people to post on PTA sights.
- Some sites (i.e., Facebook) allow contributors or multiple administrators, so adding specialized contributors can allow greater flexibility and faster response. (i.e., Reflections chair, Vice President for programs, fundraising chair) PTAs should set guidelines ahead of time about what each contributor can and cannot not post. This would typically be posting about their particular program. This allows posts from sources which are quick and accurate.
- Be sure all logins and passwords are kept in a safe place and passed on to the next term's officers. Suggest sites be registered to generic emails for the officers so accounts can be passed along with out interruption.
  (i.e., sunshineptapresident@gmail.com or president@sunshinepta.org)

Content on PTA social media:

- Posts should be PTA related and approved. Highlighting special events, programs, grants, PTA and school deadlines, allied agency information and other information of interest to PTA members is a good use of social media.
- Content from vetted sources or excerpts from previously PTA approved flyers, emails or website content is a good way to keep content timely without over burdening your officers. (See Red, Yellow, Green guidelines)

Others posting on PTA social media:

- PTA Social Media sites (including websites) that are administered and owned by the PTA and not the school, do not need the principal's approval for posts. A good working relationship between the PTA and the school site administrator is best, so when possible coordinate. Remember, any PTA material that is passed

out on school property or the school website still needs to be approved by both the president & principal.
- Each local PTA can decide if it wants to allow comments on sites or if it prefers a push only site. The advantage to having a more interactive site is that it allows you to know how your community feels; the disadvantage is that it allows comments which will need to be monitored. **If you do allow public comments or postings, someone will need to monitor the site and decide what is appropriate. Inappropriate or off topic comments should be deleted.** The PTA can decide to delete any comment or post it chooses.
- Setting guidelines and posting them on your sites can help if you feel it is necessary to delete a comment and are asked why. Your PTA social media sites are controlled by you local association and you are not required to post or keep any items.

Suggested Posting Guidelines:
(This can be posted on any social media your PTA uses and allows comments from the public.)

Please follow these guidelines when commenting on our site:
Be relevant Be respectful Be honest Be discreet Be responsible

- *Be Relevant*
  Stay on topic.

- *Be Respectful*
  Keep things civil. Avoid abusive or offensive language, threats, hate speech, libels and calls for violence. And don't make jokes about the misfortune of others.

- *Be Honest*
  Use your real name. Don't post commercial messages. Don't publish copyrighted material that belongs to someone else.

- *Be Discreet*
  Don't publish telephone numbers, addresses or other personal information about yourself or others.

- *Be Responsible*
  Think about what you write before posting. Users are solely responsible for what they post.

Guidelines for Communications Leaders

An effective communications team may include one or more of the following:

- Communications vice president or chairman
- Website manager

- Social media coordinator/administrator
- Newsletter/e-newsletter editor
- Distribution chairman

See Job Descriptions for [Communications Leader](#).

A communications leader:

- **Works with the unit's elected officers to develop an annual communications plan**. The plan should complement the goals of the association and include internal messages for the school community as well as external communications for the public.
- **Serves as the chairman of the communications committee**.
- **Assists the president and other officers in their preparation of remarks for media interviews.**
- **Assists program and event chairmen** in publicizing upcoming events/programs. Follows up with articles highlighting the event or program.
- **Attends training workshops, and makes reports during meetings, as requested.**
- **Passes along all communications resources to a successor,** including past communications and publications, website and publication information, distribution information, and schedules.