

Social Media Policy for the Diocese of Evansville



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About this Document

This policy provides guidance and direction to diocesan employees (which includes clergy, religious and lay people) and anyone who serves or represents the diocese as a volunteer regarding the use of social media. The goal of this policy is to inform and empower diocesan employees and volunteers in the use of technology and social media, and to provide clarity, guidance and best practices in the use of these resources. While technology and social media engagement may vary by generation, our competence in technology and social media will only enhance our ministerial endeavors.

Section I – Policy Statement

1.1. The Diocese of Evansville recognizes that social media is one of the fastest growing forms of communication in the world. Echoing Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI’s message for the 44th World Day of Communication, it is our goal for our employees and volunteers to use social media as a powerful tool for evangelization and to “facilitate forms of collaboration and greater communion in ways that were unthinkable in the past.”¹ The Internet provides various ways for individuals to interact and has changed the way we communicate and share information. The Diocese of Evansville views the Internet as an important communication and evangelization tool and encourages administrators, pastors and school officials to support Internet use and to give employees and volunteers the necessary training and tools to interact safely and responsibly online. However, those using these tools should bear in mind that certain comments and information may have a harmful effect on the Diocese of Evansville, its reputation and its employees. In light of this possibility, and at the urging of the Department of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, all diocesan employees and volunteers are expected to adhere to the following policy regarding the use of both personal and diocesan-related websites and Internet tools, including social networks and blogs.

¹ *Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 44th World Communications Day. May 16, 2010.*

Section II – Policy Application

2.1. This policy applies to all priests and deacons incardinated in the Diocese of Evansville, other priests and deacons who have the faculties of the Diocese of Evansville, seminarians of the diocese, members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life (religious), lay persons who are employed full-time or part-time in the parishes, schools, agencies and other institutions of the Diocese of Evansville. All diocesan volunteers are also expected to adhere to the policy.

Section III – Definitions

3.1. **Blog** (a contraction of the term “web log”) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, news on events or subjects, (e.g. church teaching, theology, morals, etc.). May contain other material such as graphics or videos.

3.2. **Micro-blog** is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates or micromedia such as photos or audio clips and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group that can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, digital audio or the web. The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog in that it is typically smaller in actual size and aggregate file size. A single entry could consist of a single sentence or fragment or an image or a brief video. *Example: Twitter – A form of micro-blogging; entries are limited to 140 characters.

3.3. **Social Media** (also called Social Technology) is a term used to describe the type of words, sounds and pictures shared via the Internet and based on conversation and interaction among individuals online.

3.4. **Social Network** is a site that is entirely driven by the content of its members. Individuals are allowed flexibility in privacy settings, in posting text, photos, video, links and other information and in their level of interaction with other members. *Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Google+, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr are often included in lists of social networking sites, although sometimes YouTube and Flickr are designated as multimedia sharing sites, while Twitter is currently more often designated as a micro-blogging application.

3.5. **Social Networking** is a term that describes platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, etc. in which one identifies/maps real-world relationships onto on-line relationships and then uses those relationships to network. Social networking is a subset of social media.

3.6. **Official Page** is a page on a social media platform that is created with the approval of an Administrative Authority; is used in the course of work, school or ministry-related activities; and represents an office, ministry, parish, school or other diocesan entity. *Any and all pages created to represent an individual employee or volunteer in a work-, school- or ministry-related capacity also meet this description and must fulfill all related requirements.*

3.7. **Personal Page** is an account with any social media platform or site that is primarily used to communicate with family and friends on a personal, casual basis. It typically contains such items as personal photos, home videos, updates about the regular comings and goings of one's daily life, etc.

3.8. **Professional Page** is an account with any social media platform or site that is primarily used to communicate to those individuals with whom the account owner has a professional relationship. Information chosen for inclusion on this account is relevant to the account owner's professional audience and/or related to their ministry.

3.9. **Administrative Authority** is defined as an individual with the authority to authorize employees and volunteers to establish social media accounts on behalf of the Diocese of Evansville and its affiliates. The following list further defines the Administrative Authority:

- 3.9.1. The Bishop of the Diocese of Evansville
- 3.9.2. The Vicar-General of the Diocese of Evansville
- 3.9.3. The Chief Operating Officer of the Diocese of Evansville
- 3.9.4. Diocesan Departmental Directors
- 3.9.5. Pastors and Pastoral Life Coordinators
- 3.9.6. School Principals

3.10. **Employee** is any person who is employed by the Diocese of Evansville or an affiliate. An employee may be a priest or deacon, religious or lay person who may also be a member of a religious institute.

3.11. **Adult** is an individual who is 18 years of age or older.

3.12. **Child** is a person under 18 years of age.

3.13. **Volunteer** is an adult who works without financial or material gain on behalf of the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates and who is not an employee.

Section IV – Creation and Approval of Social Media Activities

4.1. Operating under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese of Evansville, the Administrative Authority will work with other individuals who have been identified and approved by the Administrative Authority to create and maintain a positive and appropriate social media presence. Approval must be granted by the Administrative Authority for a parish group, public or private, to own or maintain a web presence that associates itself with a parish or one of its entities.

4.2. The Administrative Authority must give consent for a department or ministry to develop and maintain a social media presence. Upon approval, the department will work with the Administrative Authority, or his or her designee, to create and establish the social media presence.

4.3. Within Catholic schools, the Administrative Authority must give consent for a group to develop and maintain a social media presence.

4.4. Additional Catholic associations or organizations established in the diocese with permission of the Bishop, but not directly administered by the Bishop, may use social media. The social media content of such groups will be periodically monitored by the Administrative Authority, and the Bishop reserves the right to restrict social media for such groups if diocesan guidelines and policies are violated.

4.5. Any use of the Diocese of Evansville's name or logo for branding or titling pages, blogs or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing by the Diocese of Evansville prior to implementation and use. Request for consent is to be made to the Director of Communications. Any usage at the time of adoption of the particular policy is not grandfathered and must be authorized.

4.6. Once approved by the Administrative Authority, a social media site or page must be created independently of an individual's personal social media account(s). The site or page must be created as a professional account, and all email addresses associated with the site or page in question must be professional email addresses that feature the EVDIO email domain, or another approved domain (for example, jdoe@evdio.org, not jdoe1968@aol.com).

Section V – Oversight of Social Media Activities

5.1. Once the use of social media has been approved for a department or organization, the Administrative Authority shall periodically review social media under his or her purview and will respond to inquiries or complaints within a reasonable amount of time. The competent authority to practice oversight of social media activity is as follows:

5.1.1. Websites that reside on Diocesan-owned hardware must be registered with the Administrative Authority. In all cases, the Administrative Authority and his/her designees are encouraged to utilize support of the diocesan information technology representative for initial creation of a web presence.

5.1.2. Within a parish, the Administrative Authority who authorized the creation of social media sites and/or tools within the parish is ultimately responsible for monitoring those sites and tools, along with a partner who is also a member of the Administrative Authority. In other words, two members of the Administrative Authority will be assigned in all cases to oversee any diocesan social media activity.

5.1.3. In our Catholic schools, after receiving the Administrative Authority's approval, the school principal, or his or her designee, may oversee the school's social media presence.

5.1.4. The Administrative Authority reserves the right to advise parish and organizational leaders on correcting problems with sites and, furthermore, reserves the right to suspend or request that changes be made to sites that do not reflect the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and/or basic decency standards.

5.2. All social media forums associated with the Diocese of Evansville must be registered with the Administrative Authority, or their designee, and the following information must be provided:

5.2.1 The URL/address for the site or forum

5.2.2. The name of the person who created the site

5.2.3. The name of the person assigned to monitor the site

5.2.4. Contact information for the site monitor – including phone number and email

5.2.5. Date when the site will be or was established

5.2.6. The purpose of the site

5.2.7. The administrative user ID and password for the site(s)

Section VI – Conduct for Social Media Activities

6.1 Only groups with approval from the Administrative Authority may post links or blogs on parish or parish school websites.

6.2 Employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Evansville and its affiliates will comply with all aspects of the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* (<http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm>). While photographs of children under the age of 18 may be used on websites and in social media, care should be taken to avoid connecting pictures with names, locations or other personal identifiable information. In addition, parents and guardians should be given the opportunity to opt-out of having pictures of their children used in this fashion. The Diocese of Evansville and its affiliates will review alleged violations of the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* on a case-by-case basis.

6.2 Employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Evansville and its affiliates are expected to

comply with the following guidelines, established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for social networking with minors:

6.2.1. Before posting pictures of a minor or communicating with a minor electronically (which would include online social media platforms like Facebook as well as email and text messaging), the adult must gain permission from the minor's parent or guardian.

6.2.2 Parents/guardians must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how social media are being used, be told how to access the sites and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages).

6.2.3 While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it is not necessary to use the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Twitter, parents can receive it in a printed form or via e-mail).

6.3 Password-protected areas on websites may involve the use of a username/password or other such means to access all or portions of the site. In the event that an employee or volunteer, subject to approval of the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates, gives a child access to a website that is not otherwise openly accessible to the public, that same access must also be provided to the child's parent/guardian, if the parent/guardian so desires.

6.4 In the event an employee identifies himself/herself as, or is manifestly understood to be, an employee of the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates on a personal blog (or other website with a similar purpose), to help reduce the potential for confusion, the employee is expected to put the following notice in a prominent place on the website **"The views expressed on this website are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."** Even with this notice present on the site, any information that causes or has the potential to cause embarrassment to the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates should strictly be avoided.

6.5 No one has the right to harm the good reputation that a person enjoys or violate the right of every person to protect his or her privacy. If an individual feels his or her good reputation is being harmed, the Administrative Authority will investigate the matter. If it is found that an individual was aggrieved, appropriate action is to be taken, which may include a request for removal of the offending content.

6.6 Church personnel are prohibited from disclosing, via the Internet, information that is understood to be held in confidence by the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from disclosing, via the Internet, any information that is proprietary to the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates, except by explicit permission of the appropriate agency.

6.7 The Diocese of Evansville and its affiliates will not tolerate employees, volunteers or other authorized users posting obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory, defamatory or other comments, links and/or images, including sexually explicit material or other material

deemed inappropriate, or which could in any way discredit or cause embarrassment to the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates, employees, vendors, partners, agencies, schools and others.

6.8 No organization or entity may assume the name Catholic without the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority in accord with Canon 300. The competent ecclesiastical authority to grant consent as determined by Canon 312.

6.9 The content of the Diocese of Evansville or its affiliates' social media presence is to be strictly in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. If content is contrary to the teachings of the Magisterium, the Diocese will ask that the information be removed. If the registered person refuses to remove the content, appropriate action will be taken, which may include shutting down the social media outlet. All persons and groups subject to this policy consent to the authority of the Diocese to shut down offending sites and will cooperate in the process.

6.10 All applicable criminal and civil laws will be followed.

Section VII – Best Practices for Social Media Activities

7.1. When using social media in ministry, keep in mind that individuals of all ages have the right to a safe environment in their homes, schools and parishes. They are also entitled to a safe environment in their digital interactions with the Church through social media. Those using social media, especially minors, should be instructed to and expected to report violations of their electronic safe environment just as they would violations of their physical environment.

Similarly, people of all ages need to be instructed in their responsibility as participants in the conversation of social media within the Church. Just as individuals are corrected when they violate the norms and expectations of a school or any community (including the possibility of disciplinary measures), so must they also be corrected for misuse of the social media resources of the parish, school or the diocese.

7.2. When using social media as vowed and/or ordained individuals in the Roman Catholic Church, priests, deacons and religious should keep in mind that they have made a commitment to God and to His people to live their lives in particular witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. This witness is called for in the electronic world as well as in the physical world. As the Holy Father wrote in his message for the 44th World Communications Day, the presence of the Church, and in particular her priests, in social media “will not only enliven their pastoral outreach, but also will give a ‘soul’ to the fabric of communications that makes up the ‘web’.” Therefore, it is necessary for those living consecrated lives to ensure that there exists no divide between their lives or conduct in the physical world and in the virtual world.

7.2.1. The obligation to maintain a safe environment in social media is the same as in face-to-face communications and interactions.

7.2.2. Social media accounts and profiles, whether personal or professional, are one's "pastoral outreach" and clearly identifying oneself as a vowed religious and/or member of the clergy by using one's appropriate title (Fr., Deacon, Sr., Br., *etc.*) and including the religious community (CSC, OSB, OSF, SJ, *etc.*) in one's displayed profile name bears witness to that outreach.

7.2.3. Photos, especially one's profile photo, links and other items included in social media are to be appropriate for one's state as ordained ministers and/or vowed religious.

7.4. Please keep in mind that professionals, ministers, employees and volunteers are perceived as representatives of the Catholic Church whether they are communicating in person or using written and/or voice communication. Electronic and social media interactions are no exception. The same responsibilities to create a safe environment in one's physical space extend to all social media sites. Examples include:

7.4.1. Addressing behavior observed in social media according to relevant parish/school and diocesan policies and professional ethical expectations;

7.4.2. Ensuring that all interactions conducted through social media are appropriate and do not threaten or harm the reputation of the Diocese of Evansville; bring disrepute upon a parish, school or entity; or create an unsafe environment.

7.5. As corporate entities, parishes, schools, diocesan offices and programs need to realize that it is inappropriate and in many cases against the usage policies of social media platforms to register an office or entity for a personal profile. Any use of social media must therefore conform to policies of the social media platform.

When using social media, parishes, schools, offices or programs are to have profiles or pages that represent the entity as an entity, not which represent the entity as an individual person (*e.g.* It is not acceptable to create a profile with first name "DIO" and last name "Communications" for the Office of Communications).

7.6. Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Share what others have said by linking to the source and using embedded content. Be sure to cite your source when quoting. When using a hyperlink, always confirm that link goes where it should and that the content is appropriate.

7.7. If a social media site or platform allows the administrator the ability to moderate comments before they are posted, it is highly advisable to choose this option and moderate comments before they are posted to the live site or page.

Section VIII – Enforcement of Social Media Policy

8.1. The Diocese of Evansville reserves the right to periodically monitor any employee or

volunteer's personal social media presence.

8.2. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this Social Media Policy will be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination or removal from position.

8.3. The Diocese of Evansville reserves the right to make changes to this policy at any time and at its sole discretion and interpret and administer the policy in light of changing circumstances and events. Future modifications of this policy will be made available on the Catholic Diocese of Evansville website (www.evansville-diocese.org).

DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

PLEASE PRINT

Employee Name:

Last

First

Middle Initial

Job Title and Work Location:

Verification Statement

I verify that I have read and understand this policy. I agree to abide by this policy and also understand that the Diocese of Evansville may amend or change the policy at its discretion without notice.

Employee Signature

Date

RETURN SIGNED FORM TO EMPLOYER