

## **GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

At Grand Traverse County, we understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends, and co-workers around the world. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media. This policy applies to all employees who work for Grand Traverse County or one of its subsidiary agencies.

### **SECTION I - GUIDELINES**

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, *social media* can mean many things. *Social media* includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board, or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with Grand Traverse County, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

The same principles and guidelines found in Grand Traverse County policies apply to your activities online. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance or the performance of fellow co-workers, or otherwise adversely affects members of the public, contractors, people who work on behalf of Grand Traverse County, or Grand Traverse County legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **SECTION II - KNOW AND FOLLOW THE RULES**

Carefully read these guidelines and related policies, including, but not limited to, Grand Traverse County's policies concerning ethics, harassment, discrimination, computer equipment use, information systems, etc., to ensure that your postings are consistent with these policies. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Disciplinary action pursuant to this policy should be taken only after consultation with the County's Civil Counsel.

### **SECTION III - BE RESPECTFUL**

Always be fair and courteous to fellow co-workers, persons who serve on boards or commissions, elected and appointed officials, members of the public, contractors, or people who work on behalf of Grand Traverse County. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers or by utilizing our Open Door Policy than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid

using statements, photographs, video, or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, or intimidating, that disparage members of the public, co-workers, or contractors, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law or Grand Traverse County policy.

#### **SECTION IV - BE HONEST AND ACCURATE**

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about Grand Traverse County, fellow co-workers, members of the public, contractors, people working on behalf of Grand Traverse County, competitors, or others.

#### **SECTION V - POST ONLY APPROPRIATE AND RESPECTFUL CONTENT**

- Maintain the confidentiality of Grand Traverse County trade secrets and private or confidential information. Trade secrets may include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how, and technology. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures, or other internal business-related confidential communications.
- Do not create a link from your blog, website, or other social networking site to a Grand Traverse County website without identifying yourself as a Grand Traverse County employee.
- Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for Grand Traverse County. If Grand Traverse County is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of Grand Traverse County, fellow co-workers on behalf of Grand Traverse County. It is best to include a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Grand Traverse County."

#### **SECTION VI - USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK**

Refrain from using social media while on work time or on equipment we provide, unless it is work-related as authorized by your manager or consistent with Grand Traverse County's computer equipment use policy. Do not use Grand Traverse County email addresses to register on social networks, blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use. Any conduct pertaining to this policy that adversely affects job performance, the performance of a co-worker, or otherwise adversely affects members of the public, or those who work on behalf of or represent Grand Traverse County, may result in disciplinary action.

**SECTION VII - RETALIATION IS PROHIBITED**

Grand Traverse County prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another co-worker for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**SECTION IX - MEDIA CONTACTS**

Employees should not speak to the media on Grand Traverse County's behalf without contacting the appropriate media department as designated by the County Administrator. All media inquiries should be directed to them.

**SECTION X - FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact your HR representative or appropriate contact.

APPROVED: December 22, 2015