**Social Media Policies for BSW & MSW Students and Practitioners**

Moving from regular social life and social media practice to professional life as a social worker can require some reflection on usual ways of communicating with friends and family online.

Prospective employers now look over your social media presence, and you do not want wild photos, trash talk, or other obstacles to allow others to make judge your professionalism. So, it’s time to Clean It Up…your internet presence, that is. Consider the checklist below and take action if needed.

**Social Media Checklist for Social Workers**

**General:**

* “Google” yourself to see what information is available on you.
* Review and delete (or un-tag) inappropriate posts, tweets, blogs, pictures, videos, etc.
* Be cautious in revealing your personal information, such as DOB, phone number, address, family members, place of employment, etc.
* Be cautious in using online dating services.
* Be very selective about whom you friend, follow, etc.
* Be very selective about what you “like,” as people can judge you by these choices (and track you for ads and other exploitation).
* Use the highest privacy settings available for all social media sites.

**BSW or MSW Program Related (while you are in school):**

* Do nor friend faculty members or work supervisors until you have graduated.
* Be very cautious about what you share (via any format) about faculty, field agencies/instructors, peers, co-workers, employers, etc.
* Develop a professional social media site: LinkedIn is the norm

**Agency-Related:**

* Review and adhere to all agency guidelines and policies regarding the use of all means of technology in the agency.
* Do not look up present or past clients on social media, unless there is a compelling reason. Talk with your supervisor about this kind of research—it may or may not be advisable.
* Do not friend or follow current or past clients.
* Do not share client information via email or text.
* Use only your professional (agency) e-mail address and phone number to communicate with clients. All correspondence should be of a professional nature.
* If you do communicate with clients by e-mail, be aware that all e-mails are generally retained in the logs of an agency’s internet service provider. While it is unlikely that someone will look at your correspondence, some agencies may monitor and your e-mails could be read by the system administrator.

**Practical Tips and Language to Use:**

***Clients may ask to friend you on social media.*** A polite way to decline the request is to emphasize agency policy and your concern to protect the client’s privacy. You may say: “I do not add clients as friends on social networking sites because they are not secure and doing so can compromise your confidentiality.”

***Regarding interacting online you may say:*** “Please do not message me on social media/email as I may not get back to you on time and I want to protect your privacy. I prefer to use agency email only to set up or change our appointment times.”

**What else would you add to this list?**