



Council on  
Developmental Disabilities

# Social Media Policy for Divided Times

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# Disclaimers and funding information

- *Visit our website to learn more about the Council's current federal funding and grant information:  
<https://www.tn.gov/cdd/who-we-are/disclaimers.html>*
- *The contents of this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, Administration on Community Living/Health and Human Services or the U.S. Government.*

# Today's Presentation

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Introduction

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Social Media Policy Overviews

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Real-world Application

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Q&A



# Introduction

# Why Have a Social Media Policy?



**SETS CLEAR  
EXPECTATIONS**



**GIVES CONSISTENT  
GUIDANCE**



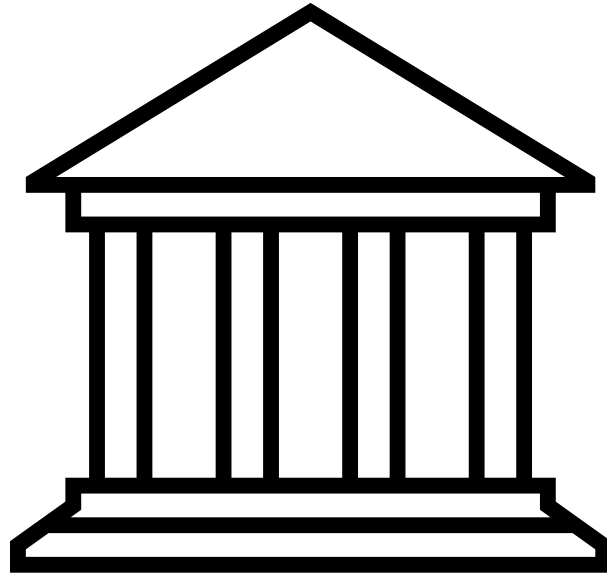
**ENCOURAGES POSITIVE  
ENGAGEMENT**

# Two Roles, Two Social Media Policies

**Council Members** – Public communications policy introduced at orientation and acknowledged annually

**Staff** – State of Tennessee employee policy acknowledged annually

# One Key Element



POLITICAL NEUTRALITY



# Policy Overview: Appointed Members

# Appointed Member Policy



Social Media/Online Communications Policy is a section of the larger Public Communications Policy



DD Act principles and member code of conduct are named as guiding documents for ALL interactions

# Appointed Member Policy

- Encourages the use of social networking and online platforms to share Council information and resources.
- Reminds members that affiliation is public information & personal online interactions will reflect on the Council.
- Encourages members to identify in their profile that they are speaking personally and not in an official capacity.

# Appointed Member Policy

- States that staff monitor social media and may contact members for help with consistency with Council values.
- Gives examples of how members can use their online accounts to help promote the Council and its resources.
- Addresses the need for social media interactions with Council staff to remain professional to maintain appropriate boundaries.



# Policy Overview: Staff

# Staff Policy

- Developed by the TN Dept. of Human Resources for state employees: [DOHRPolicy12-058.pdf](#)
- References First Amendment protections but says that it must be clear employee is not speaking in their official role or on behalf of the agency or the state.

# Staff Policy

*“State employees must be cognizant that they still represent the State in their private, personal settings. The lines between public and private, personal, and professional are blurred in online social networks, and content or information an employee creates, posts, or shares on their personal account may reflect on the State. Therefore, employees must be aware of their association with the State and be thoughtful of how they present themselves online.”*

# Staff Policy

- References the state's workplace discrimination and harassment, violence in the workplace, abusive conduct in the workplace, and code of conduct policies.
- Addresses confidential information, trademark/copyright laws, logo infringement, etc.
- Prohibits non-job-related personal use of social media on state equipment and allows for monitoring without notice.

# The Bottom Line



Council members and staff should be prepared for intervention if social media conduct introduces risks for the agency.



But it's not just about policy. It's about who we are.



**Real-World Application**

# The Power of Positive Engagement

## Meet Alaina

Alaina is 22-year-old with complex disabilities.

She may not use words to speak, but with her AAC device, she can finally tell her family **"I love you."**

TennCare covered that device after private insurance said no, and it gave Alaina a voice.

TennCare helps her stay mobile, communicate, and get life-saving care. It's not extra - it's essential. Her parents work. They pay for insurance. But TennCare makes the rest possible.

**Medicaid isn't just healthcare — it's communication, connection, and dignity.**



TN Council on Developmental Disabilities

## Meet Courtney

**"Medicaid allows me to live, not just survive,"** says Courtney, an autistic advocate with multiple disabilities, including a traumatic brain injury.

Courtney relies on Medicaid for essential support to live in her own apartment—caregivers who help with daily tasks, medication management, and decision-making.

Without it, Courtney would be **forced into an institution** instead of being active in her community.

**Medicaid isn't just healthcare—it's the right to live on your own terms.**



## Meet Kezia

Employment and Community First (ECF) Choices through TennCare is more than just assistance—it provides Kezia **essential support** that allows her to live in her community, care for her cat, and maintain stability.

**"ECF services help disabled individuals be independent on so many levels. Without this support, my cat and I would become homeless,"** she shares.

**"Taking that away would make thousands homeless and strip us of the dignity and civil rights we've fought so hard for."**

**Medicaid isn't just healthcare—it's the difference between a home and homelessness.**



## Meet Edward

Medicaid isn't just healthcare—it's a foundation that makes employment possible.

For Edward Mitchell, TennCare provides essential nursing care, allowing him to work and contribute to his community.

**"Without Medicaid, I'd have to ask myself—would I even be able to continue working?"**

**Medicaid isn't just healthcare - it's a door to employment.**



# The Power of Positive Engagement



Calling all artists, photographers, poets & writers!

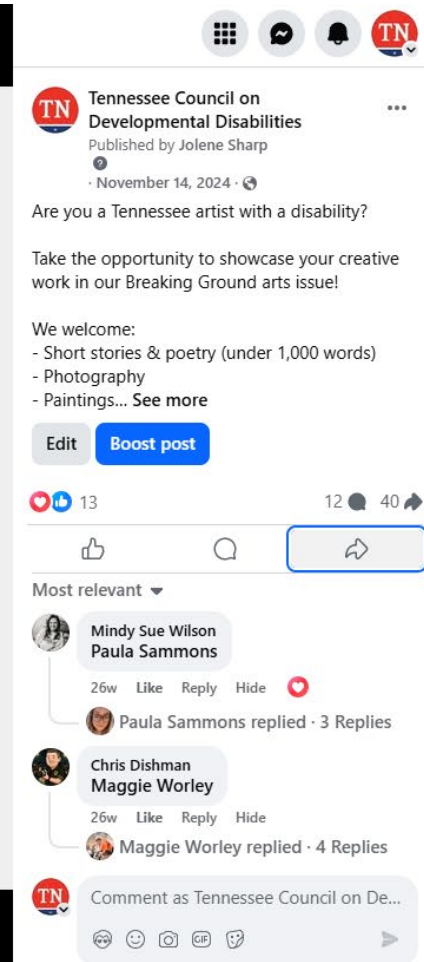
We feature creative work of all kinds from Tennesseans with disabilities of all ages in our annual arts issue of *Breaking Ground* magazine.

**Email your work to [tnddc@tn.gov](mailto:tnddc@tn.gov) by January 15 for consideration.**

Limit to 3 works per person.



**TN** Council on Developmental Disabilities



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Are you a Tennessee artist with a disability?

Take the opportunity to showcase your creative work in our Breaking Ground arts issue!

We welcome:

- Short stories & poetry (under 1,000 words)
- Photography
- Paintings... See more

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Paula Sammons replied · 3 Replies

Chris Dishman Maggie Worley  
26w Like Reply Hide

Maggie Worley replied · 4 Replies

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# Managing Social Media Conflict

- A Council member engaged in vitriolic debate on Facebook with another member of our network.
- A Council member frequently shared misinformation during Covid, directly contradicting public health information we were producing.
- The Governor's office reviewed a Council member's social media feed while considering the person for another role in the administration.
- A heated debate broke out on Facebook within our Partners in Policymaking network over a bill allowing new, congregate living facilities for people with disabilities.

# Maintaining Staff Health



We have chosen to prioritize staff mental health over social media engagement.



While we still produce social media content for our account, we do much less monitoring of online discussion within our network.

# Resources

Full policies:

- Council members
- Staff (state employees)

Reach out any time:

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Questions?