Guidelines for a Social Media Policy and Staff Education 2018

Social media has become a mainstay in life, offering a wealth of access to people and information. While it brings opportunity for positive learning and connection, the rapid growth of social media also brings risk of misuse and harm. Almost all employees are using social media in their personal lives and should be given the skills and education to do this without risk to people in care, the agency or to themselves. Staff education on social media can help to mitigate this risk and better equip staff to support people receiving services in their use of social media while still maintaining professional boundaries.   The topics listed below provide an outline for agencies to design a social media policy and staff training on social media.

Social Media Policy:

The foundation for employee training begins with the agency and the development of a social media policy. A comprehensive social media policy outlines how an organization and its employees are expected to conduct themselves online. When crafting a social media policy, consider the following items:[i]

- Define how and when the agency name, logo and activities can be used in social media posts.
- Ensure employees posting on social media are aware that posts pertaining to the agency need to be clearly stated as their own opinions unless authorized to speak on behalf of the agency.
- Ensure policies address the use of agency email addresses for social media accounts.
- Establish clearly defined parameters for the use of social media while at work including the use of agency computers and equipment for accessing employee social media and the types of websites that can be accessed from agency computers.
- Ensure that policies comply with appropriate privacy laws and HIPAA to protect the privacy and confidentiality of people receiving services.

- Ensure policies address limitations for taking photographs/recording people receiving services without specific photo releases as well as restrictions regarding posting any images or using any individually identifiable information on social media.
- Ensure that restrictions or limitations for connecting with people receiving services online and in social media are clearly articulated.
- Include guidelines for expectations regarding manager/subordinate relationships on social media as well as respecting professional boundaries of coworkers.
- Remind employees that complaints or concerns about the workplace should be brought to supervisors for resolution before being brought to an online forum.
- Develop expectations for use of cell phones at work. Personal use of cell phones may be restricted to breaks and off-duty time.
- Define consequences for unacceptable employee posts, tweets, or other online behavior.

Social Media Training:

Staff Training Objectives:

- Increase staff knowledge of social media.
- Increase staff awareness of agency parameters for use of social media.
- Increase staff skills to maintain agency standards on social media.
- Increase staff skills to support people receiving services on safe use of social media.

Once the agency social media policy is developed and approved, it should be incorporated into staff training. Other training considerations include:[ii]

- Provide information regarding various social media sites so employees are educated to understand the social media platforms they are using.   This can include information regarding site terms of use, conditions, limitations and other policies.
- Develop staff education on social media that includes information about the permanency of all material posted; that even immediate deleting of information does not mean it's gone; that platforms considered anonymous can still be traced.
- Encourage staff members to have their social media accounts 'private' to help discourage people receiving services from finding their accounts.
- Provide guidance to staff on connecting their personal social media accounts to the agency account.
- Develop guidelines on how to navigate already established social media connections with people receiving services and their family members; how to

respond when contacted by a person receiving services and/or their family, and after a person leaves care.

- Ensure that staff understand that agency policies regarding conduct apply to employee behavior within social media. Agency staff have an obligation to establish, communicate and enforce professional boundaries with people receiving services in the online environment.

Considerations for the Person Receiving Services:

The advent of technology and social media has been a boon for many people receiving services. Social media platforms can help increase opportunities to communicate, to connect with new and different communities and provide a sense of freedom for people receiving services. Agencies should consider offering ongoing training and education to support people receiving services to minimize and manage risks while also enjoying the benefits of social media. Training could also be offered to staff to learn how best to support people receiving services to navigate online communities safely.[iii]

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[i] Adapted from: NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, *Ethics and Social Media,* September 24, 2018. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: https://www.naadac.org; National Council of State Boards of Nursing, *A Nurses Guide to Professional Boundaries,* August 2018. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: https://www.ncsbn.org/ProfessionalBoundaries_Complete.pdf; Hootsuite, *Why You Should Initiate Social Media Training For Your Employees,* October 5, 2015. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: https://blog.hootsuite.com/why-you-should-take-employee-social-media-training-seriously

[ii] Adapted from Forbes, *Why Your Business Needs a Social Media Policy and Eight Things It Should Cover,* May 25, 2017. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from https://forbes.com/site/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2017/05/25/why-your-business-needs-a-social-media-policy-and-eight-things-it-should-cover.com; American Express, *Employees Gone Wild: 8 Reasons You Need a Social Media Policy Today,* August 13, 2018. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/employee-social-media-policy/

[iii] Adapted from Safer Net, *For People with Learning Disabilities.* Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: http://www.safernet.org.uk/for-people-with-ld; ConnectABILITY.ca, *Keeping the ME in Media.* Retrieved October 15, 2018 from: https://connectability.ca/Garage/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Keeping-the-ME-in-Media-tips-social-media.pdf

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