POLICY/PURPOSE:
The Cedar Rapids Police Department (CRPD) endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the department’s position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by police department personnel.

DEFINITIONS:
Page - The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post - Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile - Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Social Media - A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks - Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech - Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
POLICY TITLE: Social Media
STANDARD/REF #: 

APPROVED BY: Wayne Jerman, Chief
REVIEWED DATE: 

REQUIRED REVIEWERS: CID Captain; Patrol Captain; PIO
REVISED DATE: 11/21/2014

ON-THE-JOB USE:
Determine strategy
• Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency’s presence on the website.
• Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department’s official website.
• Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as residents, neighborhood associations, community groups, businesses, youth or potential police recruits.

PROCEDURE:
All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police, or designee, and shall be administered by the department’s Social Media Team or as otherwise determined.

Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the police department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.

Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
• Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
• Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the police department.
• Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the police department reserves the right to remove obscenities, personal attacks, off-topic comments, or other comments deemed inappropriate.
• Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

DEPARTMENT-SANCTIONED USE:
Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
• Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the police department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
• Identify themselves as a member of the police department.
• Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential
information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without authorization from the Chief of Police, or designee.

- Not conduct political activities or private business.

Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department’s social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without approval by the Chief of Police, or designee.

Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

**Electronic Property of the CRPD**
The CRPD maintains confidential records. Such information shall remain private, protected, and shall only be used for legitimate business reasons. Under no circumstances will an employee of the CRPD disclose this information without proper authorization.

The following list, which is not all-inclusive, provides examples of private and protected information:

- Information in I-LEADS, NCIC and other police databases.
- Information in People Soft and other employee databases including employee personal phone numbers and emails, mailing and residential addresses
- Identification numbers such as social security number, driver’s license number, employee ID number
- Identifying information such as age, gender, race, religion, marital status, and education level

The use of individual electronic devices (including cellular phones, PDAs, notebooks, MP3 players, and digital cameras) are prohibited during an incident unless there is an actual job responsibility to use the electronic media in performance of assigned duties. All photographs or other electronic recordings taken while an employee is on duty or working an extra job through the department, and is being compensated by the City of Cedar Rapids, are considered the intellectual property of the City and may only be disseminated within the guidelines and intent of this policy. In all other cases, these may only be disseminated with the expressed consent of the Chief of Police or designee.

Posting of employees photos or videos are only allowed in accordance with the Peace Officers Bill of Rights.

**Potential Uses:**
Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:

- Missing persons
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- Wanted persons
- Gang participation
- Crimes perpetrated online (i.e. cyberbullying, cyberstalking)
- Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer
- Crimes against persons or property

Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:

- Providing crime prevention tips
- Offering online-reporting opportunities
- Sharing crime maps and data
- Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e. Crimestoppers, text-a-tip)

Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:

- Road closures
- Special events
- Weather emergencies
- Missing or endangered persons

Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.

The police department has an obligation to include internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.

Searches should be conducted by trained background investigators.

Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.

Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.

Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.

Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

PERSONAL USE:

Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:
• Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the police department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.

• As public employees, police department personnel are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties—that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities—is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the police department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and the department.

• Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without authorization from the Chief of Police, or designee.

• Department personnel are cautioned that disclosure of their employment with the police department could not only become a safety issue, it could potentially have legal ramifications. Therefore, employees are cautioned to be extremely mindful and scrutinize the posting of any information that provides means of personal recognition and identifies them as employees of the department such as photographs, videos, or other media that depicts the department logo, uniform, or similar identifying items on personal web pages. Furthermore, revealing, displaying or discussing this type of information in association with other members of this department without their permission is strictly prohibited.

• When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the police department’s code of ethics is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
  o Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
  o Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.

• Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer’s testimony in criminal proceedings. Department personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination of office.

• Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the police department without express authorization.
Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for:

- Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation)
- Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person
- Using someone else’s name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person’s permission for an exploitative purpose
- Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner

Department personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.

Department personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the police department at any time without prior notice.