

## **SPSY PROGRAM POLICY ON STUDENT USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by students within the School Psychology (SPSY) program. For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including but not limited to, blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Flickr, and YouTube. This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet.

The SPSY program is committed to supporting honest, transparent, and knowledgeable dialogue through social media. While SPSY students are welcome to publish or comment using social media in accordance with this policy, they are urged to do so thoughtfully. The same reasons that make social media attractive also are the same elements that can injure how you come to be perceived as a professional. As such, all uses of social media should be treated in the same manner as other professional obligations as outline in the ethical guidelines and policy recommendations set for by the *American Psychological Association (APA)*, *National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)*, *Ohio Board of Psychology (OBP)*, and the *Ohio Department of Education (ODE)*.

Students who are placed on practicum and/or internship students should comply not only with the statements outlined herein, but also any policies and procedures of the placement district. Below are recommendations for appropriate social media use. These tips will contribute to successful use of social media.

### **Maintain Confidentiality**

- Refrain from posting confidential information about the SPSY program, its faculty, its students, its alumni, or various affiliates to the program.
- Refrain from posting any sensitive information regarding records of students and families that you may work with as part of your training experience. Use good ethical judgment and follow university polices and federal requirements, such as the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* and the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)*.
- As a guide, do not post anything that you would not present at a conference.

### **Maintain Privacy**

- Refrain from posting or contributing to discussions about a situation involving named or pictured individuals without their expressed permission.
- As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum. Let your social networking do no harm to the SPSY program, its faculty, its students, its alumni, various affiliates, or to yourself.

### **Respect Your Audience and Colleagues**

- The public, in general, reflects a diverse set of customs, values, and points of view. Thus, maintain a tone of respect in all posts and comments to social media networks.
- Avoid personally offensive comments, ethnic slurs, insults, obscenity, or potentially defamatory statements that may be interpreted as ridicule or demeaning to persons on the basis of their age, color, creed, disability, national origin, immigration status, socioeconomic status, political beliefs, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation or any other personal or distinguishing characteristic.
- Respond respectfully to anyone who posts comments you disagree with. Have a "thick skin" and be prepared for negative responses/comments.

### **Manage "Friending" Appropriately**

- In general, faculty/staff and other affiliates who hold management/supervisory roles are discouraged from "friending" requests from students they oversee. Supervisors may accept friend requests initiated by the student if s/he does not believe it will impact the work

relationship negatively. Supervisors may deny friend requests initiated by the student if s/he believes doing so would create a conflict of interest.

- “*Friending*” of students and families on social media websites is discouraged. Professionals in care roles generally should refrain from initiating or accepting friend requests except in unusual circumstances such as the situation where an in-person friendship pre-dates the professional relationship (a situation that may pose a conflict of interest, in and of itself).

### **Time Posts Carefully**

- Make sure that your social media presence does not interfere with your commitments and obligations as a student.
- Refrain from using social media while in class or during experiential learning opportunities within schools (i.e., Practicum and Internship), unless it is work-related. Maintain your focus on work so as to not become distracted.

### **Think Before You Post**

- While communication through social media is primarily a personal matter, this does not mean that it is private. Written conversation inside social media networks can be found through search engines such as Google. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that one of them will forward or copy what you say and make it visible to a wider audience. Further, archival systems save information even if you delete a post. As a result, personal conversation within social media should be considered public rather than private.
- If you feel passionate or angry about a subject, it’s wise to delay posting until you are calm and clearheaded. Social networks often are not the best forums for raising grievances that might be better addressed in other venues or handled privately.
- Post only pictures that you would be comfortable sharing with the general public.

### **Respect Copyright and Trademark Laws**

- Copyright and Trademark law as it relates to online media is still emerging. As a general rule of thumb, always attribute material to the original author/source or link to others’ work. Avoid reproducing logos or trademarks.

### **Pass the Publicity Test**

- If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it likely will not be acceptable for social media. Ask yourself, would I want to see this posted publically tomorrow or ten years from now?
- Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see—Google has a long memory! Think of every post as being on record.

### **Correct Mistakes**

- If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If someone accuses you of posting something improper, deal with it quickly.
- If you chose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

The SPSY believes that sharing of information and experiences benefits the whole humanitarian community and ultimately the beneficiaries we serve. However, use of social media also entails personal responsibility. As such, use common sense where information is concerned that is confidential and/or outside of your areas of understanding/expertise; and, refrain from commenting negatively on others within the program or those who are affiliated with the program. All allegations of violations by students in the KSU SPSY program will be appropriately investigated and corrective action taken, including academic disciplinary action that may result in dismissal (see the KSU School Psychology Program's *Policy of Addressing Concerns about Student Performance or Functioning*).

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