

The Court may adjust the policy or deviate from its application as unique conditions warrant, at the discretion of the Presiding Judge and/or Court Administrator. This policy is a general guideline only. This policy is not a binding contract and may not be treated as such. Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement should also refer to the appropriate agreement.



## The Municipal Court of Seattle Court Administration Manual Policies and Procedures

**Chapter Title: Social Media Use Policy**

**Section #: MCS-10-5.01**

**Effective Date: February 1, 2011**

**Purpose:** Utilization of social media sites will provide the Court with messaging tools to communicate relevant and timely information about programs and services. The Court continuously seeks out new avenues to promote public education within the community it serves, and will actively pursue the use of technology to communicate information to the public.

**Policy:** This policy sets forth general guidelines for use of social media tools to communicate with the public, media, and colleagues to help build and strengthen working relationships.

**I. Application:**

This policy applies to:

- A. Twitter
- B. Facebook

**II. General Guidelines for Using Social Media**

**Targeting and Messaging**

- A. Determine who your audience is or who is potential audience
- B. Why is your message important
- C. Give people a reason to connect with you
- D. Communicate with customer, not at customer
- E. Content of message should be digestible

**III. Social media messages from the Court will direct readers to the Court's web site for more information. Content/subject matter for tweets may include but are not limited to the following topics:**

- A. Emergency information as defined in the Court's Disaster Plan
- B. Court closure, delayed opening, or early closure
- C. Juror information
- D. Community outreach efforts
- E. Communications with prosecutors, defense, and pro-tems
- F. New Court programs
- G. Announcements of interest to the public

- IV. Targeted audiences may include but are not limited to the following persons/groups:
  - A. Public
  - B. Media
  - C. Prosecutors & defense
  - D. Judges & pro-tems
  - E. Court employees
  - F. City employees
  
- V. Authorized users of Court's social media accounts
  - A. Presiding Judge
  - B. Court Administrator
  - C. Public Information Officer
  - D. Other designated court staff
  
- VI. The Court will generally follow the City of Seattle Social Media Use Policy, but will use its discretion on portions of the policy.
  - A. All City of Seattle social media sites posted by executive departments will be subject to approval by the Mayor's communications director. This does not apply to the Court.
  - B. The City of Seattle's websites (Seattle.gov, SeattleChannel.org, SeattleCenter.com, SPL.org, etc.) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presences used by the Court.
    - 1. The best, most appropriate City of Seattle uses of social media tools fall generally into two categories:
      - As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information).
      - As marketing/promotional channels which increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
    - 2. Wherever possible, content posted to City of Seattle social media sites will also be available on the City's (Court's) main website.
    - 3. Wherever possible, content posted to City of Seattle social media sites should contain links directing users back to the City's official websites for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Seattle.
  - C. The Presiding Judge, Court Administrator, and Court Technology Director will be responsible for the content and upkeep of any social media sites their department may create.
  - D. City of Seattle social media sites shall comply with Seattle Ethics and Elections code and administrative rules.
  - E. City of Seattle social media sites are subject to State of Washington public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is a public record. The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding

completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format and so that it can be produced in response to a request (see the City of Seattle Twitter, Facebook and CityLink standards). Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant departmental public disclosure officer. When considering public disclosure requests of this nature, the Court will refer to its policies which govern disclosure of court records and non-court records.

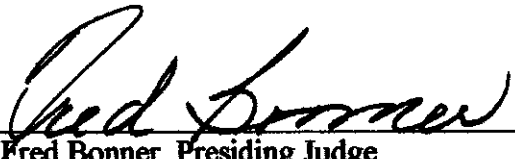
- F. Washington state law and relevant City of Seattle records retention schedules apply to social media formats and social media content. Unless otherwise addressed in a specific social media standards document, the Department maintaining a site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a City server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Appropriate retention formats for specific social media tools are detailed in the City of Seattle Twitter, Facebook and CityLink standards.
- G. Users and visitors to social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between City departments and members of the public. City of Seattle social media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:
1. Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;
  2. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;
  3. Profane language or content;
  4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
  5. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  6. Solicitations of commerce;
  7. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  8. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
  9. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time,

date and identity of the poster when available (see the City of Seattle Twitter, Facebook and CityLink standards).

- H. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law.
- I. The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.
- J. Administration of City of Seattle social media sites.
  - 1. The DoIT Citywide Web Team will maintain a list of social media tools which are approved for use by City departments and staff.
  - 2. The DoIT Citywide Web Team will maintain a list of all City of Seattle social media sites, including login and password information. Departmental public information officers will inform the DoIT Citywide Web Team of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.
  - 3. The City must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.
- K. For each social media tool approved for use by the City the following documentation will be developed and adopted:
  - 1. Operational and use guidelines
  - 2. Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites
  - 3. City and departmental branding standards
  - 4. Enterprise-wide design standards
  - 5. Standards for the administration of social media sites

**References:** *New Media & the Courts: The Current Status & a Look at the Future*,  
 Conference of Court Public Information Officers  
*Future Trends in State Courts 2010*, National Center for State Courts  
*City of Seattle Social Media Use Policy*, DoIT

Approved:  2-11-11  
 Fred Bonner, Presiding Judge Date

Approved:  2-11-11  
 Yolande E. Williams, Court Administrator Date