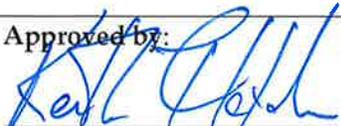
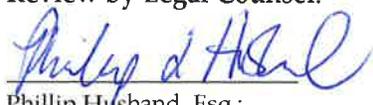


District of Columbia Department of Health		<b>PROCEDURE 620.300</b>
<b>Social Media</b>		Implementing Office: Office of the Director/Office of Communications and Community Relations Training Required: Yes Originally Issued: April 24, 2014 Revised/Reviewed: <b>JAN 14 2020</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>  LaQuandra S. Nesbitt MD, MPH; Agency Director	<b>Review by Legal Counsel:</b>  Phillip Husband, Esq.; General Counsel	<b>Effective Date:</b> JAN 14 2020  <b>Valid Through Date:</b> JAN 14 2023

<b>I. Authority</b>	Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1996; Mayor’s Order 1997-42; OCTO0007 Social Media Access and Use Policy; BEGA Advisory Opinion 1559-001, issued January 26, 2017.  This policy shall supersede and replace all prior Department of Health procedures on standards of social media use, including, most recently, SOP 620.30 Communication Standards – Social Media Standards.
<b>II. Reason for the Policy</b>	Social media is a powerful tool for disseminating vital information, maintaining responsiveness to the public, and reinforcing the Department’s brand. This policy establishes expectations and standards for the use of official DC Health social media accounts while engaged in official Department activities, mitigates the risk of violating the legal rights and dignity of other individuals (co-workers, those served by DC Health programs, and members of the public), purposefully or accidentally, through a DC Health employee’s use of social media.
<b>III. Applicability</b>	This policy applies to all Department of Health (DC Health) employees, contract employees, volunteers, interns, summer youth employees, federal employees assigned to the District government, or any other individual who discharges his or her employment duties under the direction of the Department of Health (collectively referred to herein as “employees” or “DC Health employees”).

<p><b>IV. Policy Statement</b></p>	<p>Social media is part of the portfolio of the Office of Communications and Community Relations (OCCR) within the Office of the Director (OD). The OCCR Director is the accountable manager over all tasks assigned to OCCR.</p> <p>The Director and the Chief of Staff have the authority to represent the Department on a social media account in their official capacities; e.g., using their own name as the handle. No other employee has the authority to do the same without the Director's written authorization.</p> <p>The OCCR Director, or his/her designee, is the only employee permitted to represent DC Health on an official social media account. He/she is also the only employee with the authority to create a new official DC Health social media account, or delete an official DC Health social media account. The OCCR Director may delegate this authority. Such a delegation of authority extends only to the stipulated social media platforms and accounts. The OCCR Director may withdraw this delegation at his/her discretion. An employee may not access official DC Health social media accounts once delegation of authority has been withdrawn.</p> <p>If a health professional licensing board requests that DC Health staff create and manage a social media account for that board, the board staff will relay that request to the OCCR Director to create the account. In such instances, the account will be considered an official social media account. OCCR will manage the account according to the procedures enumerated herein.</p> <p>Passwords selected for official social media accounts should have a level of complexity to ensure security and be changed every 90 days. Only the OCCR Director, and staff specifically delegated to manage social media accounts, are authorized to possess passwords to access official social media accounts.</p> <p>The OCCR Director may issue written memoranda with specific guidance to staff responsible for the management of official DC Health social media accounts. These memoranda shall be consistent with this SOP and the District of Columbia Board of Ethics and Government Accountability (BEGA) - Advisory Opinion – 1559-001.</p>
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Health information contained in social media postings from official DC Health accounts should be truthful and not deceptive or misleading. Accordingly, employees posting content on official social media accounts should strive to ensure that information provided is, whenever possible, supported by current medical peer-reviewed literature, emanates from a recognized body of scientific and clinical knowledge, and conforms to minimal standards of care.

DC Health employees posting content via official social media accounts shall not disclose any non-public information entrusted to the Department of Health by internal or external clients without written consent.

The OCCR Director has final approval authority over any content posted on an official social media account and may order the deletion of any such content in violation of written guidance or deemed by the Director of OCCR to be inappropriate.

Any employee posting inappropriate content on an official DC Health social media will also be reported to OCTO per policy OCTO0007.

Comments made by members of the public on official government social media accounts or on social media accounts of employees operating in their official capacities may be protected speech under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is against DC Health policy for any DC Health employee to block a user on an official social media account or on social media accounts of employees operating in their official capacities. On social media platforms with a comment feature, comments from the public shall be disabled for DC Health official accounts and social media accounts of employees operating in their official capacities. The OCCR Director has the authority to enable comments for individual posts in situations where public comment is being specifically sought out. In such cases, no public comments may be deleted.

Except for those who are authorized by the Director to operate a social media account as a representative of the agency in their official capacities, DC Health employees who disclose their employee status, and/or mention the Department on their personal social media accounts and accounts other than official social media

accounts, shall do so within the parameters of ethics rules, on their personal time, and with proper notification that the views expressed on their social media accounts are their personal views and are not endorsed by DC Health. As questions of the appropriateness of personal social media content vary significantly, possible ethical violations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The Department will refer to BEGA - Advisory Opinion – 1559-001 (Social Media and the Code of Conduct) as a guide for evaluating possible cases of unethical use of personal social media.

Except for those who are authorized by the Director to operate a social media account as a representative of the agency in their official capacities, any DC Health employee who chooses to disclose their DC Health employee status in the biographical section of a personal social media account shall include a proviso that content on that social media account is not sanctioned or endorsed by, nor is it intended to represent the opinion of, DC Health or the DC government. Accordingly, employees should routinely question whether their personal social media presence gives the impression that they are speaking on behalf of DC Health or the District. If the answer is "Yes," the Employee should refrain from such conduct.

An employee may forward content to OCCR for consideration for posting on an official DC Health social media account. Examples include, but are not limited to: promotional materials for events convened by DC Health, or a DC Health-funded organization; content from such events, including photos; publications or health information relevant to the Department's mission. The OCCR Director, or designee, has the discretion to review any submitted content for appropriateness, and alignment with DC Health messaging before posting on an official social media account.

DC Health employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential or privileged information learned by the employee only through the course of his or her employment with the Department of Health on any social media account.

The Department will refer to BEGA - Advisory Opinion – 1559-001 (Social Media and the Code of Conduct) as a guide for evaluating possible cases of unethical use of social media across official DC

Health and personal social media accounts, including but not limited to, violations of the District's Employee Conduct regulations and the Local Hatch Act. Any employee posting content that is believed to be in violation of these rules will be reported to the District of Columbia Office of Government Ethics.

DC Health employees must strive to avoid any actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. DC Health employees are prohibited from using public office for private gain, including through the use of social media, e.g. soliciting or accepting gifts via social media platforms when the gifts are given because of the recipient's employment with DC Health or the DC Government, or to influence the recipient's performance of his or her employment duties.

DC Health employees are subject to the Local Hatch Act. Per BEGA, "[t]herefore, and with minor limitations, an Employee can engage in political activity on a personal social media account when off duty and outside of a District owned building or room, so long as the Employee is not using his or her official authority or influence to interfere with an election. Thus, a post on a personal social media account shall not reference an Employee's employer, employing agency, or position, when the post includes political activity."

DC Health employees (other than the Director) are generally prohibited from providing endorsements or recommendations on behalf of DC Health. Per BEGA, "anyone who undertakes to provide a letter of recommendation for a contractor or grantee must be certain that he or she has the authority to speak on behalf of the District government or the writer's employing agency or District entity." As such any narrative recommendation or endorsement on a social media account must be done in a personal capacity. The narrative must not reference the employee's title, position, or employer. This provision applies only to narrative endorsements or recommendations and does not apply to automated responses such as clicking *Like*, or its equivalent.

Each DC Health employee is solely responsible for his/her electronic communications on all social media platforms. Any incoming or outgoing content that adversely impacts fellow employees, DC residents, visitors to the District, vendors, people

	<p>who work on behalf of the District of Columbia or the Department, the Department’s legitimate business interests, or the public’s confidence in the Department is prohibited.</p> <p>DC Health shall fully cooperate with investigations including, but not limited to, investigations internal to the District government as well as civil and criminal investigations related to allegations of an employee’s inappropriate use of social media.</p> <p>This policy does not prohibit employees from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Reporting violations or concerns in accordance with procedures established under the District of Columbia Whistleblower Protection Amendment Act of 1998. Information can be found at <a href="http://dchr.dc.gov/page/whistleblower-protections-and-obligations">http://dchr.dc.gov/page/whistleblower-protections-and-obligations</a>.</li> <li>b) Reporting waste, fraud, and abuse in accordance with procedures established under the authority of the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General Powers and Duties Amendment Act of 1999. Information can be found at <a href="http://oig.dc.gov/services/suggest.shtm">http://oig.dc.gov/services/suggest.shtm</a>.</li> <li>c) Exercising his or her right to speech in a manner that does not violate District or federal law.</li> </ul> <p>Any employee in violation of any part of this SOP may be subject to commensurate disciplinary action.</p>
<p><b>V. Definitions &amp; Acronyms</b></p>	<p><b>BEGA-</b> District of Columbia Board of Ethics and Government Accountability</p> <p><b>Gift</b> – has the meaning set forth in section 1803 (Gifts from Outside Sources) of chapter 18 (Employee Conduct) of title 6B (Government Personnel) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations.</p> <p><b>Inappropriate content-</b> Electronic communication that includes but is not limited to, discriminatory remarks, harassment, retaliation, sexual innuendo, threats of violence, or similar content which violates established ethical standards or Federal or District</p>

	<p>laws. Additionally, any electronic communication, which unlawfully or unethically discloses protected or confidential information about a third party without consent.</p> <p><b>OCCR-</b> Office of Communications and Community Relations</p> <p><b>OD-</b> Office of the Director</p> <p><b>Official social media account-</b> An account DC Health creates and maintains to represent its official positions, disseminate information to the public, and/or receive information from the public. The handle of an official social media account, may be, but is not limited to, the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The name “DC Health,” or any close variant;</li> <li>2. The name of any DC Health office or program;</li> <li>3. A name that coincides with a DC Health advertising or media campaign.</li> </ol> <p><b>Political activity-</b> Any activity that is regulated by the District directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, partisan political group, ballot initiative, or referendum. “Political activity” is not limited to activities regulated by the District when the employee is engaging in political activity during his or her tour of duty.</p> <p><b>Prohibited source</b> – has the meaning set forth in section 1803 (Gifts from Outside Sources) of chapter 18 (Employee Conduct) of title 6B (Government Personnel) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations.</p> <p><b>Social media-</b> all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort (messages, pictures, video, etc.) on the internet, including to an individual’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the Department.</p>
<p><b>VI. Procedures</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>VII. Contacts</b></p>	<p>Director of the Office of Communications and Community Relations</p>

**VIII. Related Documents, Forms and Tools**

[BEGA – Advisory Opinion – 1559-001](#)