

April 4, 2016

FROM: Sandra Del Sesto

RE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ETHICS: Policy Issues to Consider

Prevention professionals should always adhere to the same principles of professionalism outline the Prevention Code of Ethics online as they would offline. With this in mind, the following are additional guidelines regarding the use of social media:

- Prevention specialists are discouraged from interacting with current or past direct program participants on personal social networking sites. It is recommended that prevention specialists establish a professional social networking site for this purpose.
- It is the responsibility of the prevention specialist to ensure, to the best of his or her ability, that professional networks used for sharing confidential information are secure and that only verified and registered users have access to the information.
- Prevention specialists should be aware that any information they post on a social networking site may be disseminated (whether intended or not) to a larger audience, and that what they say may be taken out of context or remain publicly available online in perpetuity. When posting content online, they should always remember that they are representing the prevention field, their organization and their community, and so should always act professionally and take caution not to post information that is ambiguous or that could be misconstrued or taken out of context. It is recommended that employees not identify themselves as connected to their agency on their personal website.
- Employees should be aware that employers may reserve the right to edit, modify, delete, or review Internet communications and that writers assume all risks related to the security, privacy and confidentiality of their posts. When moderating any website, the prevention specialist should delete inaccurate information or other's posts that violate the privacy and confidentiality of participants or that are of an unprofessional nature.
- Prevention specialists should refer, as appropriate, to an employer's social media or social networking policy for direction on the proper use of social media and social networking in relation to their employment.

Local certification boards have the authority to discipline certified prevention specialists for unprofessional behavior relating to the inappropriate use of social networking media, such as:

- Inappropriate communication with participants online

- Use of the Internet for unprofessional behavior
- Online misrepresentation of credentials or factual information
- Online violations of confidentiality
- Failure to reveal conflicts of interest online
- Online derogatory remarks regarding a participant, colleague, supervisor or any other individual with whom they interact professionally
- Online depiction of alcohol or other drug intoxication
- Discriminatory language or practices online

Adapted from **Model Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Social Media and Social Networking in Medical Practice**. Prepared by Federation of State Medical Boards. Retrieved from www.fsmb.org