



Using Social Media for Family Finding Overview

Technology and social media can be powerful tools in our successful efforts of family finding. Diligence requires the use of all resources at our fingertips- this includes social media. As we know, with power comes responsibility. Here are some guidelines to support the ethical uses of social media.

Ways Social Media Should Be Used	Ways Social Media Should Not Be Used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tool for finding kin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through the use of agency-approved (agency or professional) profile ▪ Tool for engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through the use of direct messages, ONLY if successful engagement has not been achieved through other methods ▪ Create a professional account. Use a separate device from your personal one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not create a fake account ▪ Do not send or accept a “friend” or “follow” request from any customer or their kin ▪ Do not post on a customer or kin’s “wall” or public page ▪ Do not provide confidential information in messages when attempting engagement

Direct Message Examples	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “My name is <i>Fill in Name Here</i>. I work at <i>Your County Children’s Services</i> as the <i>Family Search and Engagement Specialist</i>. I am trying to locate family for a child involved with our agency, and I believe you may be a family member of a child involved with our agency. I am not permitted to share information on social media due to confidentiality. Please contact me at 555-329-5555 or YourEmailAddress@jfs.ohio.gov.” ▪ “Hi there, my name is <i>Fill in Name Here</i>. I work at <i>Your County Children’s Services</i> and my job is to locate relatives of children who have come into agency custody. I am reaching out to you because I believe you are related to a child who has recently come into care. Please call me at 555-123-5555 or email me at YourEmailAddress@YourCounty.jfs.ohio.gov. Thank you so much.”

Creating a Professional Social Media Profile:	Social Media Sites/Apps to Search (including but not limited to):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add a professional picture of yourself or logo of your agency ▪ Make your profession and employment clear ▪ Find other colleagues’ professional profile and “friend” them ▪ Post to your wall or page from time to time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information about upcoming events at your agency ○ Share community events ○ Share Relevant articles to your wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facebook ○ Instagram ○ Twitter ○ Pinterest ○ LinkedIn ○ YouTube ○ WeChat ○ WhatsApp ○ Skype



Additional Considerations

Informed Consent

- When possible, customers should be informed ahead of time that internet and social media searches will occur and be documented.
 - This responsibility can be included in introductions and explanation of services:
 - Example: Family search and engagement is part of our everyday work. We utilize these skills to find contact information for supports for families as we work with them.
 - Allow for an opportunity to ask questions about the process
 - Explaining (informing) creates an understanding of what is happening, not necessarily requesting permission. This work will take place.

Confidentiality

- Never share specific individual names or identifying information via social media
- Never use public wifi, and always lock your computer when it is unattended
- If a specific entry or post needs to be captured, save it in a secured manner and only share with necessary parties (ie: your direct supervisor)

Administration Policy Considerations

Create a Protocol

- Write out processes for family search and engagement. Include when and how kin are contacted and when social media should be used for family finding efforts
- Ensure clarity around “should and should not’s” (see above)
- Documentation expectations
 - Example: “A social media search was conducted on *Fill in Date Here* for the following people related to our case: *Adam Doe*. Using Facebook for family search and engagement these individuals were found..... “

Informed Consent

- Determine where an informed consent statement will be posted (ie: organization website)
- Statement should include:
 - What information is being sought and what standards are in place
 - The purpose for gathering this information
 - What determinations can potentially be made based on information found
- Duty to Protect: consider a warning about limitations of communication on any account- for example, do not communicate via social media in the case of an emergency.

Note: Refer to your agency’s relevant policies around social media use

Guidance for Kinnect to Family and Social Media provided with the consultation support of the National Association of Social Workers - Ohio Chapter. This guidance does not supersede any county, site, or state policy or procedures in place now or in the future.