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## Social Media Policy for Counselor Education Programs

Jared S. Rose

*Bowling Green State University, jsrose@bgsu.edu*

Robin Dufresne

*Bowling Green State Univeristy, rdufres@bgsu.edu*

Allison Arnekrans

*Central Michigan University, arnek1ak@cmich.edu*

Leslie Neyland

*Wright State University, leslie.neyland@wright.edu*

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## Social Media Policy for Counselor Education Programs

### Abstract

In light of the American Counseling Association's *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) addressing the use of social media in the counseling profession, counselor education programs must prepare to properly monitor their professional social media use. Social media is defined, followed by a review of types and uses of social media. The authors discuss a process for developing a social media policy for counselor education program including reviewing the relevant literature and ethical considerations. A suggested policy is included for counseling programs to consider. *Keywords:* counselor education, social media, *ACA Code of Ethics*

### Keywords

counselor education, social media, ACA Code of Ethics

Google+, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube...the list of social media outlets continues to grow, changes rapidly, and encompasses 3 billion users (Ahmad, 2018; Terrell, 2016). In today's technologically-evolving world, social media affords individuals of all ages to be connected through distances spanning as close as the next room, to anywhere on the planet where there are mobile phone and Internet connections. The term "social media" refers to "the different forms of online communication used by people to create networks, communities, and collectives to share information, ideas, messages, and other content" (Terrell, 2016, p. 1). The different types and uses of social media are vast. Many now allow users to interact through more than one medium. For example, blogging, where individuals write diary-type information online so others can read and comment, is a social media type unto itself (Duermyer, 2019). Twitter is a micro-blogging medium which limits the number of characters a user can send at one time, yet it also interfaces with other social media (e.g., Flickr) such that photos or videos can be shared. Other examples include Pinterest, where people digitally save (i.e., electronically "pin") items of interest to their profile to organize projects/ideas so others may view; or Instagram, where photos are instantly shared with others.

One of the key elements to understand when considering social media's impact and usage, from a counseling professional standpoint, is the fact that it is so common place in today's society it cannot be avoided (Boyd, 2017). Social media is interwoven into the very fabric of the global society both for personal and professional reasons (Boyd, 2017); in fact, it is a cultural element shared by all industrialized societies. Take Facebook, for instance, which is available in 70 languages; has more than 1.7 billion monthly users (48% using daily), with over 20 million of them also utilizing Facebook's "mobile app" (an application downloaded and used on mobile/smart phones and tablets) daily; and whose users spend an average of 18 minutes per day

using (Statistic Brain, 2016). Consider for a moment that the *average time per day* spent on Facebook is almost one-third of the time a client will spend with a clinical mental health counselor in a 60-minute counseling session. It could even be longer than the last advising meeting a counselor educator had with one of their master-level advisees.

Other professions, such as social work and psychology, have been largely silent on social media policies with clients and students in training, and refrain from ethical considerations associated with social media in professional work (American Psychological Association, 2017; National Association of Social Workers, 2017). In reviewing the literature on social media use in the social work profession, Karpman and Drisko (2016) suggested that clearer ethical codes and policies with social work students were needed. In response to the growing phenomenon of social media, the past few years have seen an upsurge of information emerging in the professional counseling literature on the ethical concerns, pitfalls, benefits, and recommendations for use of social media between professional counselors and their clients (Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, 2011; Shallcross, 2011). Such literature has included school counselors' interactions with their students, parents/guardians, and administration, including The American School Counselor Association (ASCA), as part of their revised *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2016), now include multiple references to appropriate social media connections with their students, unless otherwise required by the school district (e.g., Standard A.5.d). Building upon their leadership as the first national counseling organization to include ethics around social media in the 2010 *Ethical Standards for School Counselors*, ASCA went even further in 2013. In collaboration with Facebook and iKeepSafe (an organization dedicated to education and materials to assist children

growing up safe in the technology age), ASCA developed a specific *Facebook for School Counselors* program (iKeepSafe, 2013). This program provides school counselors with a manual of how to appropriately respond to digital incidences with (and between) students; assist with detecting at-risk student behavior; address technology-related issues; and how to develop a social media policy for the school. While there are policies in place to assist with the K-12 school settings, there is little social media discussion, research, or standardized practices occurring in university counseling training programs between counselor educators and students. Such a social media policy is necessary to moderate and make clear the counselor education program's views on things such as the appropriate student, faculty, and staff interactions; who the program social media moderator is and their term of service; the social media content parameters; and the appropriate social media etiquette.

### **Developing a Social Media Policy in Counselor Education Programs**

“Counselor educators stand as models holding to the highest standards in the field” (Jordan & McCulloch, 2006, p. 10). Accepting this, and acknowledging the ethical implications of social media interactions with students, then should counselor education not be on the forefront of social media ethics? Just as other components of counselor training are clarified with counseling students (e.g., expectations of work, requirements of counseling licensure, and appropriate in-person interactions with faculty), so too should electronic interactions be regulated, and as such governed by a counselor education social media policy.

While doctoral students at The University of Toledo, the authors created and acquired approval through various university levels, the now instituted *The University of Toledo Counselor*

*Education Program Social Media Guidelines* (see Appendix A). This policy was introduced in 2014 by The University of Toledo's Counselor Education program, and have assisted in reducing the number of social media challenges experienced by faculty and students. The authors met with appropriate stakeholders, reviewed the relevant literature, focused on ethical considerations, utilized the Tillman, Dinsmore, Chasek, & Hof (2013) social media policy example as a guide to construct a university-specific policy, and submitted it for approval through the various levels of administration. The sample policy provided (Appendix A) can serve as another example for counselor educators seeking the installation of their own social media policy, just as these authors are now doing as faculty members in their own respective universities. From this work, the authors offer the following, for counselor education programs' social media policy creation via the SREAD Module: Strategize, Review, Ethics, Approve, and Disseminate.

**Strategize: Conduct a Strategy Meeting**

Department faculty can meet to discuss social media use within counseling education. Discussions should identify current available platforms and how they are being used by students and faculty, both personally and professionally. Programs may consider professional development opportunities to help educate all faculty, or form a committee to research relevant topics and bring back knowledge and resources to enrich the discussion. Tillman et al. (2013), front runners in the counseling literature on developing such a social media policy, argued the positives of social media's use within counselor education programs. For instance, the use of social media in recruitment, admissions, and program oversight gives faculty digital, culturally appropriate mechanisms to promote and enhance a counseling program's image. They went on to advocate

utilizing social media to enhance training practices (e.g., linkage to instruction, or even innovative pedagogical impact), student experience (e.g., a student blog, student groups), and alumni interaction. Care must be taken in establishing and maintaining appropriate policies. Tillman et al. (2013) recommended including elements such as the program's definition of social media; informed consent; plans for any screening of social media posts; legal and ethical policies which will be upheld; the type of appropriate content and etiquette; who has access to the social media accounts; and who will monitor such accounts. Strategy meetings can focus on these considerations and others they see as important for their particular program(s).

For instance, the monitoring and use of a counselor education department's account is something which should not be taken lightly. Just as a social media presence by an individual communicates to others who that person is, their attitudes, values, and beliefs, so too will the same be seen by a posting on behalf of the counselor education department. What type of message, tone, and presence does the department wish to communicate? Who will the post be seen by? How does the post help or hinder the credibility of the people and department? These types of questions should be discussed amongst faculty when developing their department's online presence because they can be guaranteed others who view the content will be making judgments and decisions based on what they see. There is much to consider for any counseling education program on what they should and should not include in such a policy. The point is that programs should have a policy.

Before developing a policy on social media, it may be beneficial for programs to have an assessment of social media use by both faculty and students. This knowledge will help guide discussions on potential issues and areas to address within the policy, that are most relevant to the

specific program. Programs may consider conducting a survey to identify how many students and faculty are currently using social media, which platforms are being used and how they are using the various platforms. Differentiating between personal and professional pages, and the implications of both should be addressed in the social media policy. All program faculty may not have interest in utilizing social media professionally, but at minimum, ensuring faculty have a working knowledge of the various ways in which social media is currently being used may be beneficial when exploring these topics with students and modeling professional behavior.

### **Review: Review Current Policies**

Pomerantz, Hank, and Sugimoto (2015) reported that less than a quarter of universities listed in the Carnegie Classification Data File had a social media policy that could be accessed online, after conducting a content analysis of social media policies in higher education. To date, such research has not been conducted specifically in counselor education programs, but the limited research that does exist on social media in the profession leaves the authors to assume that policies are still few and far between.

It remains unclear why more counselor education programs have yet to address social media policies for their programs. It is possible some are relying on their university to handle the task, while others, due to ever changing nature of social media, simply do not know where to begin. Tillman et al. (2013) recommend that, due to the unique nature of the counseling profession and its ethical standards, counselor education programs establish and maintain their own policy which could be handled in accordance with a university policy. Another reason that counselor education departments are slow to implement a social media policy might be generational differences

between faculty members, or between faculty and students. Although adults of all ages are now linked into social media, younger generations are using it more than their older counterparts (Kaplan et al., 2011).

Tillman et al. (2013) noted another potential reason for the delay in the ethical quandary of using social media in the admissions process to investigate potential students through faculty investigation of such students' social media posts. This practice is an ethical debate itself among higher education, and counseling training programs are certainly not exempt. Tillman et al. (2013) argued two points to this issue. First, that a policy could still be developed with this issue left out based on the views and decisions of the department and university. Second, what is paramount is that whatever policy is deemed appropriate, it is followed for all potential students, lest faculty intends to set the precedent that they only "check-up" on certain potential students.

In the absence of a social media policy that already exists, the authors suggest reviewing other program, department, or university policies related to the use of technology in the academic setting, professional dispositions, methods of communication and instruction, professional boundaries and responsibility of faculty, and academic freedom. Resources such as Student Handbooks, Codes of Conduct, Graduate Program Manuals, Faculty Handbooks, and/or Collective Bargaining Agreements may provide relevant content to assist in developing a social policy that aligns with university parameters and expectations as they relate to both students and faculty.

### **Ethics: Ethical Foundations**

After reviewing what will align with a university's specific requirements and culture, professional counseling ethical underpinnings should be addressed. Given the lack of professional

literature on counselor education and social media, it is best to begin such considerations by looking at the areas in which there is clear ethical foundation. Specifically, in considering the literature on social media as it relates to counseling clients and the interaction such clients have with their counselor. After all, “there are parallels between the counselor-client relationship and the professor-student relationship” (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). As Kolbert, Morgan, and Brendel (2002) pointed out, in both relationships there is a service sought (counseling or education) where there is an inherent power differential in the relationship (counselor over client, or educator over student), and motivation of the person with less power to enter and complete such services can be influenced if the person with more power misuses such power. A number of recommendations have been proposed for counselor-client relationship interactions with social media which are in line with the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) Standard H.6, including setting a policy and attaching it to the informed consent, monitoring social media connections, maintaining a distinction between professional and personal online presence, and adhering closely to ethical standards (Centore, 2011; Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, & Martz, 2011; Shallcross, 2011). Because counselor educators also fulfill certain supervisory roles for students, such as group supervision in an internship class or supervising doctoral students’ supervision of master’s students, all such ethical considerations would be applicable to counselor educators.

For their students, counselor educators also serve as mentors (Black, Suarez, & Medina, 2004), remediators (Hutchewns, Block, & Young; 2012; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999), and have a grading evaluation component to their interactions with students (Kolbert et al., 2002). Counselor educators’ foundation then must be built upon applicable ethical considerations. This should

include borrowing from literature on how counselor-client relationships ethically handle social media, combined with stable social media guidance as suggested in this article (Appendix A). With respect to counselor education, the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) social media considerations primarily apply to four areas: teaching ethics, student privacy and confidentiality, professional responsibility, and dual relationships.

**Teaching ethics.** The *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) makes clear that counselor educators are to teach appropriate ethical conduct to their students (Standard E.7.e Teaching Ethics). Unfortunately, in a review of literature, Downs (2003) reported that numerous studies demonstrate a lack of ethical education occurring in counselor education programs. Not only is this a concern for the students' training, but research also shows counseling students mirror poor ethical behavior they learn in their counseling program with their own clients and supervisees (Downs, 2003). Kress and Dixon (2002) echoed this concern of future ramifications for clients and supervisees, following it with suggesting counselor educators be on the ready to make their ethical teaching clear and consistent throughout their students' time in training. If all ethical behavior by counseling students is learned and later mimicked with their own clients and supervisees, it would be plausible to expect counselor education programs to take a strong, modeling stance on social media ethics so that students will learn right from the start how to navigate such interactions with others.

**Student privacy and confidentiality.** Student privacy and confidentiality is typically governed by universities themselves when expecting all of their educators to follow the standard Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 which considers students' private information. There are two points which support this being considered even further by counselor

educators. First, similar to the counselor-client relationship which expects client privacy and confidentiality to be monitored (ACA, 2014, Standard B, 2014), as well as confidentiality of research participants to be monitored (ACA, 2014, Standard G.1.b, 2014), it would be appropriate to extrapolate that the spirit of the ethical code is to guard private information about those with whom counseling professionals work and have power over. This would certainly include counseling supervisors and counselor educators.

Second, Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, and Martz (2011) contended that protecting private information is the cornerstone by which the entire counseling profession functions. They argued that information shared on social media can never be truly protected from being shared by others, misinterpreted, or individuals recognized by descriptions and therefore should not be shared through such means. Counselor educators would be wise to heed this caution. Social media outlets have no such inherent safeguards. Sharing a student's information through a social media venue could unintentionally break their privacy and/or confidentiality.

**Professional responsibility.** Standards C.6.c and C.8.a of the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) speak directly to counseling professionals being mindful, professional, clear, and in keeping with the ethical codes when statements they make are in any environment, especially those which are public. In conjunction with this ethical code, Kolbert et al. (2002) noted that questionable ethical behavior by counselor educators, when viewed by others, may still be considered a lapse in professional responsibility as it affects the reputation of the profession. Jordan and McCulloch (2006) insisted that, in the cases of inappropriate counselor educator-student relationships, the profession has been betrayed and professional responsibility has failed in six areas: the profession,

the student, other students in the program, faculty relationships, the program itself, and the college or university. A clear stance on social media within a counselor education program could assist in drawing clearer lines in how to uphold the professional responsibility for the counseling faculty.

**Dual relationships.** The final, and perhaps most fraught with challenges, area where counselor education social media ethics becomes a concern is in considerations of dual relationships. Here the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) is clear when it states counselor educators “aspire to foster...and maintain appropriate boundaries with...students in both face-to-face and electronic formats (Section F. Introduction, p. 12). Throughout Standard F.10 dealing with the counselor educator-student relationships, it is mandated that: (a) interactions which are prohibited (e.g., romantic) include electronic interactions (Standard F.10a); (b) counselor educators take the necessary precautions to stay clear of situations which subject students to possible harm (Standards F.10.d & F.10.f); and (c) counselor educators ensure students are clear to the boundary lines, why precautions are in places, and why such distinctions and precautions are being monitored (Standard F.10.f).

Herlihy and Corey (2014) reminded that dual relationships in counselor education programs are all but ensured given the various interactions counselor educators have with their students at different points of their training. To that end, it is essential for counselor educators to keep in mind three critical points regarding boundary lines with students. First, the high level of unequal power places students at an inherent risk of exploitation or role confusion (Jordan & McCulloch, 2006; Kolbert et al., 2002). Second, counselor educators are not as in tune to students' concerns about dual relationships as they believe. Kolbert et al. (2002) found that faculty

consistently underestimate the level of concern, frustration, and confusion by students' trust of faculty in dual relationships. Students, when considering different dual relationships faculty have with themselves or with other students, may feel conflicted if they perceive their faculty as being influenced on grading, biased in affording experience opportunities, or even just more time being spent with a particular student (Kress & Dixon, 2002). Combining these first two issues paints a picture of a power differential inherent to the nature of counselor training programs, with students and faculty perceiving such inequality differently. Such circumstances lead to the third critical piece counselor educators must keep in mind regarding dual relationships, which should include those which are "electronic interactions or relationships" (ACA, 2014, Standard F.10.a, p. 15) such as social media. Namely, there should be a clear, established, and followed informed consent and other policies in place which make clear to both students and faculty how the dual relationships will be navigated (Herlihy & Corey, 2014; Kress & Dixon, 2007). Herlihy and Corey (2014) reminded counselor educators that the issue is not *if* dual relationships are going to exist with students, but *how* one behaves in those dual relationships that matters. This absolutely includes social media interactions. It also reinforces the need in such relationships to teach ethical behavior, model professional responsibility, and safeguard student privacy and confidentiality.

**Approve: Approval at All Levels**

It is important to remember that, given all program faculty will be held accountable for the new social media policy in their interactions with students, collaboration and buy-in is preferred among all counseling faculty. After the social media policy has been drafted, all program faculty should have the opportunity to review the policy and make constructive comments or suggestions.

Meeting as a team to discuss the policy and plan for adoption is strongly encouraged. Programs should refer to college and/or university policies regarding the appropriate process for policy review and adoption, when necessary. Program, department, school, and college levels should also be considered. All appropriate processes for such approvals should be followed accordingly. This not only ensures accurate institution of social media policy, but support from the various administrative levels of the policy. If consequences for potential policy violations include the possibility of disciplinary action for offenses that are not specifically stated in the university policies for student conduct, programs should consider a legal review by university counsel.

### **Disseminate: Implement and Disseminate**

The last step in the SREADs Module of social media policy creation is to ensure it is updated with all other program documents and website materials, as well as ensuring it is shared amongst the student body. Reviewing the policy with current students during advising and in relevant coursework would confirm not only appropriate implementation, but also full transparency by faculty to their students. In conjunction with the ethical codes and standards, the program social media policy can be used as a reference when discussing ethical dilemmas and professional issues for counselors-in-training and licensed clinicians. Incoming students can be informed during new student orientations and other, established program mechanisms so that moving forward the policy is understood, followed, and part of the normal culture of the program, as with any program policy.

### **Future Research**

As previously noted, to date, counselor education programs have been slower in responding to the social media impact on the university arena of the profession, than such considerations given to the clinical and K-12 school arenas. As such, it may take some time for counselor education programs to implement an appropriate social media ethical response within the university setting. When considering such responses and further contributions to the professional counseling literature, some initial concepts emerge for research relating to counselor education programs' usage of social media.

First, investigations could be launched to examine if counselor education programs are incorporating ethical training with students on the use of social media (e.g., discussed through various classes as it pertains to work with clients, fellow professionals, and their faculty). Second, a look at comparing views of professional counseling social media ethics between counselor trainees, professional counselors, supervising counselors, and counselor educators would be of interest. At these different levels of the profession, do individuals view ethical dilemmas and/or ethical decision making differently? If so, how and why? Third, a review could be done looking at if programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) are using a social media policy for their counselor education programs, and what such policies entail may yield results on ways other programs may enhance their own social media policy. Additionally, if some CACREP-accredited programs have already adopted such policies, do individuals in those programs handle social media ethical vignettes differently than those from non-CACREP programs? It could be worth investigating as a means to better identify if having such policies in place impact the behaviors of the faculty, and also if such practices in

turn lead to different handling of ethical dilemmas by their students. Lastly, who would counselor education programs view as appropriate gatekeepers of department-specific social media (e.g. a departmental Facebook page or group)? That could be a qualitative endeavor perhaps as a way to gain deeper insight as to the themes of how faculty determine the construction of such a department social media outlet, the determination process for what pieces of information is shared through such venues, and how the tone of the media is established and maintained.

## **Conclusion**

The time for debate on *if* counselor education programs should have a formal response to social media is over; all that remains is *what* that response should be. Following the Tillman et al. (2013) example, a policy that was constructed through the SREAD Module of social media policy creation is provided (see Appendix A). The *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) makes clear ethical mandates of addressing social media and other technology-based behavior within the counseling profession, including those conducted between counselor educator and their students. Modeling after best practices for how counselors should interact with their clients, coupled with ethical codes surrounding teaching ethics, student privacy/confidentiality, professional responsibility, and dual relationships with students, counselor educators have the basis to develop appropriate social media policies for their departments. Students need and expect their faculty to be the pinnacle of how to behave as counseling professionals. Counselor educators owe clarity on appropriate social media usage to their students and themselves alike to ensure ethical behavior in counselor education programs. Further, as pillars of the profession, holding the responsibility for instructing and developing counselors in training, counselor educators also have a duty to clients. Counselor

educators must strive for producing ethically-sound practitioners who will set appropriate policies and procedures of social media use with their clients, and modeling this behavior in the counselor-educator-student relationship by setting clear policies is a great way to start.

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**The University of Toledo  
Counselor Education  
Program Social Media  
Guidelines**

**Social Media Definition**

Social media includes the use of web-based technologies that allow the exchange of user-generated content. Users can interact with content on other users' pages, and they can participate from tablets, computers and mobile devices. Social media is an important method of interaction and collaboration between students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and others. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Instant Messaging systems, blogs, and other personal accounts.

The social media guidelines described here will apply to all personnel (faculty, professional staff, support staff, students, and alumni) connected to The University of Toledo's (UT) School of Intervention and Wellness. Designated Student Social Media Representative and professor(s) are the only persons with authority to post media on behalf of the school. The term of appointment for the Student Social Media Representative is one academic year, renewable upon agreement of the School Chair. The professor(s) designated to be in charge of social media will be identified by the School Chair.

**Informed Consent**

- Social media of former, current, and prospective students may be reviewed by faculty of the school for purposes of admission into programs of study or to monitor student progress.
- Departmental representatives may connect with students on social media strictly through school sanctioned venues for educational/instructional purposes only and at their own risk. School representatives will not connect with students on social media for non-professional purposes (e.g., "friending," "following," etc.) to avoid confidentiality, privacy, and boundary issues.

**Access**

- The designated professor(s) and Student Social Media Representative will evaluate individuals requesting a connection to any school social media. Individuals who are current faculty, students, or alumni of the department, and current undergraduates of the university will be allowed the connection. All others will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriateness (e.g., Chi Sigma Iota [CSI] Chapter Facebook page for CSI members only).
- If content violates UT policies or guidelines, the designated professor(s) and/or Student Social Media Representative will be contacted, will remove the content, and will

request the person who posted not to post similar content in the future. When possible, posts must be pre-approved by Student Social Media Representative or professor(s). If the posting violation is egregious, the person who posted the content may be banned from future participation. The School Chair will be asked to handle extreme cases that violate this policy.

- Postings must follow federal requirements such as FERPA, HIPAA, NCAA regulations, profession-specific ethical codes (e.g., ACA, NASP, and NASPA), as well as university privacy and confidentiality policies.
- Copyright and fair use statutes must be followed. Any questions related to copyrighted material should be directed to staff at the Carlson Library, Main Campus, The University of Toledo. They can be reached at (419)530-2324.
- University computers and time on the job are reserved for university-related business as approved by office supervisors.

### **Content Guidelines**

- The designated professor(s) and Student Social Media Representative reserves the right to remove any content deemed to be inaccurate, inappropriate, offensive, or otherwise vicious (e.g. cyberbullying). Further, the designated professor(s) and Student Social Media Representatives may respond to such behavior(s) by revoking posting privileges, removing such students from the site, and incorporating such postings into retention decisions.
- It is not allowable or permissible to post confidential or proprietary information about UT faculty, staff, students, employees, alumni, or any information about activities in field placements such as practicum and internships.
- All policies, procedures, and guidelines regarding university trademarks, names, and symbols apply to social media networking sites. Policy # 3364-45-02 states that “the use or reproduction of the university seal, the name, official logotypes and official symbols for any purpose is prohibited without written permission UT faculty or from the Associate Vice President for University Communications and Marketing Operations.” Direct questions regarding appropriate use of should be provided by phone to (419)530- 2002.
- If you identify yourself as speaking on behalf of an employee or student representative of UT in a social media communication, personal opinions and viewpoints should not be included. Be mindful that even through a personal profile, you identify yourself as an employee or student representative, others may not acknowledge this distinction.

### **Social Media Etiquette**

- Your personal activities on your social media page are not subject to the ethics code of profession-specific national associations. However, if you use a social media outlet to establish a professional identity or to attract, connect, or interact with potential or current clients and colleagues, this presence has now become part of your professional activities.

Legal and ethical provisions would then apply to these activities, so it is critical to be aware that professional relationships come with legal and ethical responsibilities that do not cease to exist just because you are on a social networking site.

- Use good judgment before you post something. Remember that privacy does not exist in the world of social media; therefore, consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known as well as the reflections on the people or content involved.
- Remember who your audience is. Be aware that a presence in the social media world is, or easily can be, available to the public (e.g., prospective students, current students, colleagues, peers, parents, even clients). Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke identified groups.
- Strive for accuracy to avoid posting content that is untrue, skewed, or otherwise incorrect.
- Review content for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Once content is posted on the internet, it continues to exist even if deleted from the account.

## **Conclusion**

While different social media outlets become available each day, one thing remains clear, social media has a distinct presence in our daily lives. Despite its advantages and disadvantages, it is imperative that profession-specific educators understand the vast nature of just how powerful these communication tools have become. With this knowledge also comes the need to mitigate against potential ethical and legal dilemmas by outlining the rules and guidelines for the School of Intervention and Wellness.

A policy on social media and designating users on behalf of the school to monitor its implementation are necessary for profession-specific programs to utilize the advantages of social media, yet control for legal and ethical pitfalls. Programs need to be strategic, thoughtful, and elaborate regarding its use so that concerns can be greatly minimized. For each profession to continue its advance, social media must be included in that vision and embraced.

***PLEASE NOTE:*** This policy was adapted by Jared Rose, Robin DuFresne, Allison Arnekrans, and Leslie Neyland, from the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)'s Department of Counseling and School Psychology Social Media Guidelines (Tillman, Dinsmore, Chasek, & Hof, (2013).