

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA & USE OF ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES
School of Social Work, McMaster University

Rationale

The School of Social Work values and respects academic freedom, freedom of expression and critical debate. We are also well aware that social media have been used in ways that support social work education and social justice goals. At the same time, the expansion of the use of electronic communications including the use of social media generates unique challenges. We acknowledge that it is important to provide information and guidelines to students, faculty and staff regarding the use of social media and electronic communications in order to protect us and those with whom we work from negative consequences and to sustain respectful learning environments.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Accreditation Standards (2012)¹ state: `` The academic unit has a policy regarding ethical use of all forms of social media to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the academic unit and its field practicum community and demonstrates how the policy and procedures are consistent with the relevant human rights legislation, with the mission of CASWE- ACFTS, and with the mission of the academic unit concerned. `` (SB/M 2.4.6)

Members of the School of Social Work (faculty, staff, students) are encouraged to review policies that relate to communications including, but not limited to, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics², the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice³, the Ontario Human Rights Code⁴ and McMaster University Policies including, but not limited to, Sexual Harassment⁵, Anti-Discrimination⁶. Students are also directed to policies established by their placement organizations and the Student Code of Conduct⁷,

Potential negative consequences salient to the use of social media are:

- Breaches of confidentiality
- Harassment
- Charges of libel

Guidelines for communication about the School, Placements, service users, placement and school personnel, students:

- All postings (blogs, Facebook, twitter, utube, wikis, etc.) should be treated as public documents and writers should refrain from disclosure of confidential information, inflammatory, libellous or disrespectful language

¹ <http://www.caswe-acfts.ca/vm/newvisual/attachments/866/Media/CASWEStandardsAccreditation2012.pdf>

² http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/attachements/CASW_Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf

³ <http://www.ocswssw.org/docs/codeofethicsstandardspractice.pdf>

⁴ http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm

⁵ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/General/HR/sexharassment.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/General/HR/Anti-Discrimination%20policy.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/StudentCode.pdf>

- Confidentiality must be maintained including identifying information about service users and confidential information about the School of Social Work, the placement organization, staff and students
- When referring to the School of Social Work, placement organizations, employees, students, community members and service users, the writer, unless authorized to do so, must identify that the views expressed are those of the writer and not those of the School or placement organization
- Taking and sharing photographs without consent is a breach of privacy and possibly confidentiality

USE OF ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES IN CLASSROOMS AND FIELD PLACEMENTS

Guidelines for the Use of Electronic Technologies in the School

- Non-course related use of laptop computers, tablets and hand-held devices during class is distracting, disrespectful, and at times, disruptive. Consequently, students must only use such devices for taking notes and other activities directly related to the lecture or class activity taking place
- Receipt and responses to text and voice communications during classes should be restricted to emergencies
- Use of audio or video recording devices in the classroom must be approved by the instructor

Guidelines for the Use of Electronic Technologies in a Field Placement

- Non-placement related use of electronic technologies can be distracting, disrespectful, disruptive and viewed as unprofessional.
- Receipt and responses to text and voice communications during placement should be restricted to emergencies and should be negotiated with relevant agency personnel (e.g. a field instructor)
- Students should discuss the use of electronic technologies for personal and placement reasons with their field instructor
- Students must make themselves aware of and follow agency policies regarding the use of electronic technologies.

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