

## 2.10 SOCIAL NETWORKING

For purposes of this policy “social media” includes, but is not limited to, online forums, blogs, and social networking sites, such as TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram, etc. Austin County recognizes the importance of social media for its employees. However, use of social media by employees may become a problem if: it interferes with the employee’s work and/or position in the county; is used to harass supervisors, co-workers, customers or vendors; creates a hostile work environment; or harms the goodwill and reputation of Austin County among the community at large. Austin County encourages employees to use social media within the parameters of the following guidelines and in a way that does not produce the adverse consequences mentioned above.

Where no policy or guideline exists, employees are expected to use their best judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of a social media posting, check with your manager or supervisor.

- If your posts on social media mention Austin County make clear that you are an employee of Austin County and that the views posted are yours alone and do not represent the views of Austin County.
- Do not mention Austin County supervisors, employees, customers or vendors without their express consent.
- Do not pick fights. If you see a misrepresentation about Austin County, respond respectfully with factual information, not inflammatory comments.
- Remember, you are responsible for what you write or present on social media. You can be sued by other employees, supervisors, customers, or vendors, and any individual that views your social media posts as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. Employees can be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for what they post on social media platforms, even if the employee did not use a county computer or if the post did not occur during work hours or on county property.
- Employees may not use Austin County computer equipment for non-work-related activities without written permission. Social media activities should not interfere with your duties at work. Austin County monitors its computers to ensure compliance with this restriction.
- You must comply with copyright laws, and cite or reference sources accurately.
- Do not link to Austin County’s website or post in Austin County material on a social media site without written permission from your supervisor.
- All Austin County policies that regulate off-duty conduct apply to social media activity including. But not limited to, policies related to illegal harassment and code of conduct.
- Any confidential information that you obtained through your position at Austin County must be kept confidential and should not be discussed through in social media forum.
- Violation of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including the immediate termination of employment.