A Sample Social Media Policy For Practices (template)

The following applies to <your practice name> employees who create or contribute to social media, including but not limited to: blogs, social networks, online videos, pinboards, forums, etc.

As social media changes the way we communicate, it’s important to remember what you do online is ultimately linked to your personal life, your professional life, and our practice.

Here are our practice guidelines. They are broken into two sections, A and B:

1. Your “Personal” Social Media Participation

A1. <your practice name> respects your right to participate in social media for personal reasons during non-work hours. All <your practice name> employees participating in social media and online commentary—even on their own personal accounts—are expected to use sound professional judgment prior to posting anything online that is connected in any way to our patients or our practice, and to adhere to all office confidentiality policies. Any work-related comments should also be respectful and relevant in ways that protect the practice’s reputation and follows both the spirit and letter of compliance laws.

A2. Even though you maintain and use your own personal social media accounts, your online presence reflects upon <your practice name> and its reputation. Be aware that your actions—captured via images, posts or comments—can be considered by some as a reflection on our practice, regardless of whether or not it occurs during work hours. If you make comments about work, or work-related topics, please post respectful comments that positively promote your role as a <your practice name> employee and reflect positively on your fellow team members.

A3. Respect the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy requirements. If you are unsure of what they are, let us know so that you can be better trained.

B. Your “Practice” Social Media Participation

B1. Always be kind, generous, and genuine.

B2. Respect copyright laws and reference or cite sources appropriately. If you have a question about the appropriateness or legality of an image, always error on the safe side by asking first.

B3. If you disagree with another’s opinion, do not respond until you have visited with our practice manager or with <dr.’s name>. In every case, keep comments respectful and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it’s becoming antagonistic, in any way, immediately talk with our practice manager or with <dr.’s name> before continuing any conversation.

B4. Never participate in social media when the topic being discussed might be considered a “crisis” situation—or, if somebody is belligerent. If you are unsure, talk to our practice manager or with <dr.’s name>.

B5. If you are ever in doubt about posting a comment or image, don’t. Protect our practice and its reputation, and our patients’ privacy. Consider all content very carefully. If you have a question about the content of any post, image or statement, talk to our practice manager or with <dr.’s name>.

B6. Before posting anyone’s photo anywhere, ask for their permission, and be sure to have them sign our consent form—then properly file said form. If the person has been brought in by a caregiver and is unable to give consent, either don’t use the image or get the consent of the caregiver. If the person is a minor, their parent or guardian must sign the consent form. If you have any questions about consent, talk to our practice manager or with <dr.’s name> before posting any image.

B7. Remember that nearly every social media interaction falls into one of the following three categories… Here are our “Rules of Engagement” for each category:

Category 1: Exchanges Started by Another Party

Example: Sally Smith LIkes our Facebook page. After Sally’s visit, using her own Facebook account, she posts the following comment on our wall, “Thanks, <dr.’s name> and team, for taking such good care of me today!” Rule of Engagement: Respond directly, sincerely and openly. However, remember that there is no need to divulge any additional information beyond what the patient has shared. DO NOT write something like, “Thanks for your comment, Sally. Good thing we caught that awful gum disease you have before it became a bigger problem!”

Category 2: Exchanges Started by You (with or without a photo or video)

Example: You post on our practice’s Facebook wall, “It was wonderful seeing one of our favorite patients today, Sally Smith!” Rule of Engagement: Kindly ask Sally, before she leaves our practice, if it would be OK to thank her publicly, and/or post a photo of her, on our Facebook page. Have her sign our consent form EVEN IF you are not including a photo. Our consent form includes getting permission to disclose a patient’s name, and/or to use their testimonial, and/or to post a photo for marketing purposes.

B8: Never delete a social media comment that someone else has made on one of our practice’s social media accounts without first, checking with our practice manager or with <dr.’s name>. However, if you see something that you feel may be inappropriate, offensive, antagonistic or injurious, immediately bring it to the attention of our practice manager or <dr.’s name>.

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