



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2021

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Definition of Terms

Social media- any websites, applications and similar electronic means by which users are able to create and share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (including, without limitation, text, photos and videos) or to participate in **social networking**.

Social media account- An account or a page opened by or on behalf of the department in any social media space.

Employees- anyone, other than an independent contractor, who works for another person or who assists in conducting the business of an employer. "This policy shall refer to them as employees of the Limpopo Department of Health."

Contractors/ service provider- A person or business that agrees to conduct work for the Limpopo Department of Health as specified under the terms of a contract. Unlike employees, **contractors** are independent entities.

Social media account administrator- A designated person tasked with the responsibility to write and curates content on the Limpopo Department of Health's social media pages/accounts designed to engage followers and promote the brand in a positive manner.

Communication unit- A component of the department made by individuals employed to coordinate communication services in the department.



1. PREAMBLE

The Limpopo Department of Health realises the need to utilise modern communication resources in this information age. Government Communication is developmental in its nature, since its primary goal is to empower communities through information (communication). Therefore, there is a need for government to constantly devise creative communication approaches to complement the mainstream communication channels, in order to reach all sectors of the society.

In acknowledging the diverse nature of its stakeholders, the Limpopo Department of Health cannot utilise a blanket approach to communicate to all these stakeholders – there is a need to devise the most effective means of communication for each stakeholder group, and to maximise communication in order to uphold and promote department's reputation. Not everybody in the community uses social media and it is therefore, essential to ensure that social media and mainstream media work together and reinforce each other.

Social media is fundamentally different to mainstream media. It has its own set of demands brought about by the nature of the technology: For example, social media is always ON, and this creates a new set of demands.

Social media brings with it a degree of openness and transparency - social media also makes it possible for the department to hear directly from the people who are impacted by their decisions - both positive and negative. People can also contribute to the policy development process. By using social media, the department can turn a one-way communication activity into a two-way or even multiday interaction where audiences respond to the department - thus creating opportunities for Limpopo Department of Health to engage with its community.

It is important to understand that social media cannot replace other forms of communication and there are risks associated with using it. But government entities can minimize problems by developing plans and policies to manage social media for maximum benefit. Therefore, there should be clear guidelines as to what is and what is not allowed.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework, requirements and processes that form the basis of how the Limpopo Department of Health will use social media to interact and engage with its stakeholders both internal and external. This policy sets out key guidelines for how to maintain a social media presence and it forms the basis for the strategy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation documents in order to promote and protect the image of the Limpopo Department of Health. It also defines roles and responsibilities for the content of the department's account.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy covers all facets of social media with regards to the department's use thereof, as well as the values, responsibilities, content guidelines, employee interactions, citizen conduct and brand compliance. These are all aspects that have to be adhered to and it is the scope of this policy to define exactly what is expected from each of these key areas.

3.2 This policy applies to the following individuals and entities:

- (a) All Employees of the Limpopo Department of Health;
- (b) All employees who are authorized to post information on the department's social media sites an official capacity on behalf of the department
- (c) All service providers/contractors delivering a service to Limpopo Department of Health;

4. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK - NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

- (a) The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- (b) Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000
- (c) Public Service Act, 1984
- (d) The Protection of Information Act, 1982
- (e) Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2000



5. POLICY PROCEDURES OR POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS

5.1 SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS MANAGEMENT

- (a) Communications Unit will be required to manage content on the various social media accounts through appointed administrators of various social media pages.
- (b) Communication Unit is expected to respond to positive or negative comments on the respective social media platforms.
- (c) Communication Unit will be responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the respective social media accounts.
- (d) The Communication unit will be responsible for ensuring adherence and reviewing of this policy.

5.2 CONTENT: RULES AND REGULATIONS

5.2.1 Content Do's

- (a) Content and conversations on social media should be professional and intended to inform and engage.
- (b) Information posted by the department must be accurate, relevant and consistent with municipal policies and protocols.
- (c) Administrators will respect confidentiality and sensitivity of the information, including financial and business information, privileged information, legal advice, personal information, home addresses and telephone numbers, or any information not generally available to the public.
- (d) Limpopo Department of Health invites all stakeholders and interested parties to share and discuss their opinions provided that all comments remain respectful.
- (e) Some level of criticism is expected, and this presents an opportunity to participate in the on-going conversation, correct misinformation and deliver service.
- (f) Negative comments should be responded to using constructive feedback rather than censorship.



- (g) It is sometimes appropriate, within the professional judgement of the administrator, to allow public commentary to take its course without department's intervention.
- (h) The department's website, www.doh.limpopo.gov.za will remain the primary online
- (i) Source of information. Social media will be used to complement the website and broaden the reach.
- (j) There is a need to have a consistent level of response on the social media pages during office hours.
- (k) Without speedy response time from departments, social media will not work – urging the buy-in of top management and other managers.
- (l) Avoid use of political jargon, emoticons or acronyms not likely to be understood by most of the audience.
- (m) Limpopo Department of Health is politically neutral and should react accordingly to any political comments.
- (n) With negative comments, for e.g on service delivery, it is important to try to take the conversation in a private channel to avoid prolonged negative conversations in public.
- (o) Respond to all service/query mentions required, and any frustrations that can be addressed.
- (p) Limpopo Department of Health will use a light, friendly and appropriate tone when communicating and having a conversation with an individual.
- (q) Whatever is written, posted or uploaded will be in the public domain. Therefore, those who are responsible for posting must always be mindful that they are speaking on behalf of the Limpopo Department of Health.
- (r) Continuous monitoring of sites must be done in order to detect inaccurate or inappropriate information and respond quickly
- (s) Social media is always on. This means that people can post commentary about the department outside office hours. It is therefore incumbent upon the department to decide the hours that they will monitor and participate in social media, and make this clear on their social media sites.
- (t) No confidential information will be posted on any social media under any circumstance. It is critical that any information shared on the various social media platforms is not sensitive or confidential in any way.



- (u) The nature of social media means that responsiveness is vital. Therefore, it is not feasible to subject every post or response to comprehensive approval processes. Employees responsible for updating municipal social media accounts should be empowered to respond appropriately as they see fit and to exercise good judgment in accordance with the social media code of conduct.
- (v) Content must not discriminate in any way and must not be seen to be biased.
- (w) It is the department's responsibility to remain impartial yet informative when communicating with the public about political matters.
- (x) The department is not to share political opinions of any office bearers on any of the department's social media platforms. However official statements made by office bearers which can be published on the Municipality's website can be shared on social media platforms.
- (y) The department must not share content of a party political nature. Office bearers must use their personal accounts to publish party political statements.
- (z) Comments containing any of the following shall not be allowed on the Limpopo Department of Health's social media sites and may be removed by the Communications Unit in conjunction with management:
 - I. Comments not topically related to the particular site
 - II. Profane language and content
 - III. Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, religion, gender, national origin, physical or mental disability and sexual orientation.
 - IV. Sexual content or links to sexual content
 - V. Content about sales, advertising or promotions (commercial advertising) not related to the department
 - VI. Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or national election.



5.2.2 CONTENT: DON'Ts

- (a) Employees of the department are prohibited from sharing the following:
- (b) Any content that is unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting.
- (c) Anything that is untrue.
- (d) Any content that features explicit political messages or branding.
- (e) Content that is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive or otherwise objectionable.
- (f) Content that criticises individual community members by name.
- (g) Content which infringes the privacy of others.
- (h) Content that is the property of someone else, without permission to use it.
- (i) Spam (unsolicited sales messages)
- (j) The same applies to content posted by members of the public on departmental platforms. If any comment by a member of the public contravenes these rules, it can be deleted.
- (k) Comments that are critical of the department or its officials should be allowed to stand, provided they do not contravene any of the rules outlined above. Accusations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

5.3 SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ITS SERVICE PROVIDERS/ CONTRACTORS

- (a) Everything employees of the Limpopo Department of Health do and say on social media reflects on the department and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that employees use sound judgement and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the department's values.
- (b) Nothing about social media changes the responsibilities and obligations of employees or contractors of the department.

- (c) Regardless of whether an employee uses a private account or access social media outside of work hours - their obligations in terms of their contract of employment, the Code of Conduct, and all other applicable policies apply to all of their conduct on social media.
- (d) Employees or contractors of the department have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the department. They may therefore not say or do anything that damages the reputation of the department and must always act in its best interests. This duty extends to their use of social media. For example, employees may not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with Limpopo Department of Health.
- (e) Contractors of the department may not utilise social media to publish information about the department that is deemed insulting, denigrating and compromising
- (f) Employees of the department may not social media to insult or denigrate fellow employees, supervisors or authorities of the department of health.
- (g) Employees may not utilise social media to vent their frustrations about their colleagues, supervisors or work environment. The normal internal channels of communication must still be adhered to in order to address such.
- (h) Employees who violate any terms set out in this policy can be subjected to disciplinary processes.

6 PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT ALL TIMES

- (a) Only administrators can post department's content on official sites and employees are not permitted to represent the department on these sites.
- (b) Department's officials who participate in conversations on the official social media sites of the department do so as third party visitors and, as such, are personally responsible for their comments and information posted.
- (c) Department's employees using social media platforms and wishing to provide personal comments on platforms could contravene the accepted Code of Conduct and bring the public service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of the department.
- (d) All employees must adhere to the department's Code of Conduct at all times.

- (e) Any personal social media account, or accounts unrelated to the department, is not to be registered using a department's e-mail address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an e-mail account to register. These accounts must make use of private email addresses and contact details.
- (f) Officials cannot use department-related usernames or handles when using or setting up their personal accounts
- (g) Nothing is private on social media platforms. If individual staff members share something on any social media platform, even their own, they cannot claim that their privacy has been violated.
- (h) No politics on department's pages.
- (i) Employees should keep their tonality professional, while not losing the personal touch.
- (j) All posts should be relevant to the community.
- (k) Content to be shared is about events, departmental collaborations, awareness campaigns, links on stories, vacancies, tenders, etc. to direct traffic to the Limpopo Department of Health's Website.

7 PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE

This policy is intended to ensure that the department engages in a coordinated manner with regard to communications and communicates in a standardised manner with unified messages. Adherence to the policy will result in a coherent image for the Limpopo Department of Health. This social media policy and its procedures are applicable to every staff member in the Limpopo Department of Health. The social media policy falls within the scope of communications and will be communicated accordingly

8 CREATING AWARENESS

It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that all employees are made aware of, and receive appropriate training and education with regard to this policy.



9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Communication Directorate will monitor the implementation of the policy and report any deviations to the HOD in writing.

10 COMPLIANCE

The department may take legal action against any employee who contravenes the contents of this policy

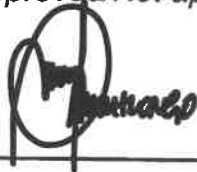
11 POLICY AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually together with the department's communication strategy

12 DATE OF EFFECT

This policy takes effect on the date of approval by the HOD.

~~Approved/Not approved~~



DR. MHLONGO F.T

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

02 JULY 2021

DATE