

**AON**

# Managing Social Media Use and Privacy

**For Direct Caregivers**

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## Disclosures

The planners have no financial relationships related to this educational activity.

## Instructions

**To obtain a certificate of earned contact hours for this continuing education activity:**

1. View the entire program.
2. Take the post-test. If you pass, you will be able to print your certificate of earned contact hours and an answer key. If you fail, you have the option of taking the test again at no additional cost. The passing grade is 70%.
3. Complete the evaluation form.



## Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide direct caregivers with an understanding of the implications of their online presence, emphasizing the importance of maintaining resident/patient confidentiality in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Practical case studies and real-world scenarios will be explored, providing healthcare workers with tangible insights into navigating the complexities of social media in their day-to-day work.



## Learning Objectives

After viewing this presentation and taking the post-test, you should be able to:

1. Explain residents' rights with regards to the privacy and security of their personal health information.
2. Differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors related to social media usage for employees of senior living facilities.
3. Identify the consequences of improper social media usage to employees of senior living facilities.



## What is Social Media?

- ⊙ A way to communicate
- ⊙ A place to create and share information
- ⊙ A way to interact with others virtually



What is social media? In simple terms, the World Wide Web is a common area to create and share information. It is also known as the internet. You connect to the internet to access the web. The internet is the connection that makes servers, computers, and personal devices work. The web is the medium we use to communicate with one another.

Social networking refers to using the internet to keep in touch. Social media refers to the actual websites you use to do so. Both “social networking” and “social media” mean the sites that help you stay in touch with people over the internet.



## Social Media or Social Networking?

- ⊙ Social media is personal sharing
- ⊙ Social networking is sharing in a group with a common bond



Young people are used to being online. They might not realize that there is a difference between social media and social networking. But there is.

Social media is less formal than social networking. Social media means sharing text, photos, and videos with friends and followers. In health care, social networking means online ways for professionals to share knowledge about work or health.

Most posts on social media are open to the public. Anyone who has an account can see the posts. Social networking posts are often limited to a chosen group. The group might be people who care for dementia patients, or people who suffer from cancer or another illness.

## Smart Devices are Everywhere

- Staff
- Residents
- Families
- Vendors



Health care workers use, and are influenced by social media. Nine out of ten health care workers say they use social media.

Many people who work in health care use social media as a way to connect with residents. They also use it to share expertise with new people.

Today almost everyone owns and uses a smart device. The Millennial and Gen Z groups are the biggest users. But even seniors rank the internet as a trusted source of health information.

During Covid-19, when in-person contact was severely limited for everyone, online media use soared. Vendors, businesses, staff, and all generations created an online presence.

## Public Spaces for Sharing Information

- ⊙ LinkedIn
- ⊙ Facebook
- ⊙ Snapchat
- ⊙ X (formerly Twitter)
- ⊙ TikTok
- ⊙ More



The internet offers many ways to communicate. Websites like LinkedIn are networking tools. People mainly use these sites to post work-related news.

Most web users know Facebook and TikTok. They also know Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and X. These social media sites are used primarily to share personal news.

Facebook and Instagram let people share messages with their own contacts.

X and TikTok offer short messages and videos intended to grab public attention.

All of these platforms can be used for marketing purposes.

## Sites that Offer Online Meetings and Face-to-Face Communicating

- Zoom
- Google Meet
- Facetime
- Microsoft Teams
- Webex



A virtual meeting is an effective substitute for gathering in person. Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, and Webex are platforms that provide real-time communication between people, either one-to-one or in a group.

Participants can see who is on the call or in the meeting, and they can communicate via microphone and usually a chat feature. These platforms are very helpful when members of a group are scattered across different locations.

To keep the use of these meeting platforms safe and effective, it is important to set and uphold clear rules. Microsoft Teams and Zoom even allow you to leave the group and go into “break rooms” to have individual meetings.

## Separate Personal from Professional Social Media Use

- ⦿ How important is your online presence?
- ⦿ How often do you post?
- ⦿ Keep personal and professional accounts separate
- ⦿ Always maintain privacy



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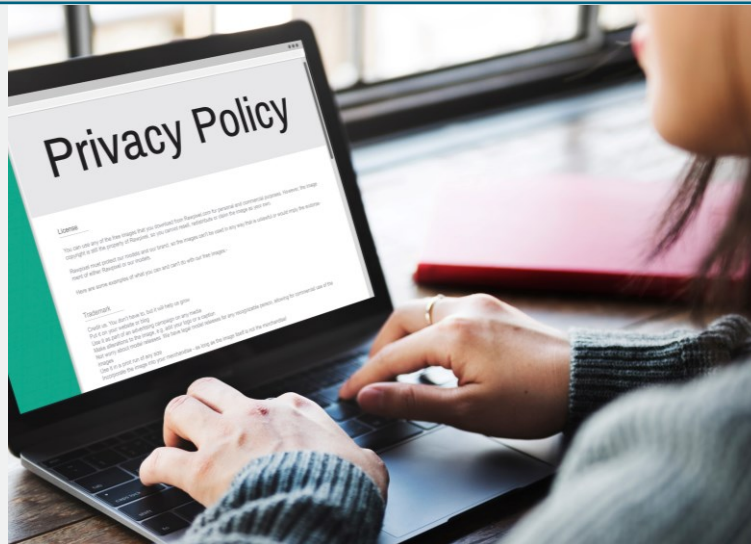
Some health care professionals post clips on TikTok, sharing moments from a day in the life of a caregiver. These videos can show the human, caring side of health care. They can bring humor to a serious job.

Some professionals post clips online both to inform and entertain. Most of them post to connect with family and friends. Others may post to make a personal or political statement. Still others strive to be influencers by getting lots of followers.

Know when to share and what to share in both work and personal settings. Know your audience and the rules of your professional organization, what postings are in violation of the profession's code of conduct. Always maintain privacy controls and follow privacy regulations.

## When Using Social Media

- ⊙ Health care standards
- ⊙ Facility guidelines
- ⊙ Ethics and privacy



Most senior living facilities have guidelines about social media use.

Many staff members carry personal cell phones with them at work. This is a way for them to communicate in an emergency. It also lets them stay in contact with supervisors, coworkers, and family.

Facility policies should be clear on the use of personal devices at work. They should spell out what platforms staff members may access through the work server. Gaming, texting friends, and scrolling are inappropriate on the job.

Employees should also follow ethical and privacy guidelines. These rules guide workers on texting, friending, and posting anything that has to do with residents.



## Uses for Social Media in Health Care

- ⊙ Getting feedback
- ⊙ Marketing
- ⊙ Recruiting staff and residents
- ⊙ E-health
- ⊙ Education



Social media has many valid uses in health care. It can be a great way to market a facility. It can help showcase the services offered in a senior living community. Social media can also help gather feedback from residents and staff.

Blending social media with the senior living website is a great idea. This type of marketing can attract new staff and residents. Social media also has a role in e-Health, the use of technology to support health. The public can also learn about aging and health through social media.

But senior facilities must use social media with care. They must always protect the privacy of residents and staff.

## What is HIPAA?

- ⊙ HIPAA protects privacy
- ⊙ Residents must consent to all photos and posts of them
- ⊙ Direct caregivers must help ensure privacy



HIPAA is a law that protects patient privacy. It requires all medical providers to get consent before sharing private health information. That includes sharing on any form of media.

Posting about residents without consent violates their privacy. It can be a cause for disciplinary action. It can also cause legal problems for both the facility and the staff member and could result in possible litigation.

Even a post that is meant to be caring can be revealing. For example, imagine a Facebook photo of a caregiver and a resident. The post reads, "This sweet lady won't even remember me tomorrow." A post like this would be unprofessional. It gives clues about the identity of the "sweet lady," her location, and her health. It violates HIPAA rules.



## What is Protected Health Information?

- ⊙ Identifies an individual
- ⊙ Is used to determine care
- ⊙ Is protected information
- ⊙ Requires consent for sharing



Under HIPAA, people must give consent to share their protected health information. PHI includes medical history, diagnosis, and most other health data. It also includes names, photos, and locations.

Anything that can identify the resident or their health conditions is PHI. Sharing any PHI requires consent. The person must be able to give consent. A person with dementia, for example, is not able to give consent but the resident's Attorney-in-Fact under the Power of Attorney or the resident's Guardian could.

Any time a resident agrees to be included in photos, videos, or posts, he or she must complete a new consent form. The form should include the reason for sharing, such as marketing or teaching.

## Guidelines Provide Structure

- ⊙ Protect privacy
- ⊙ Protect reputation
- ⊙ Protect employment



Almost all staff members have smartphones. Most use social media. Staff should keep their personal devices and profiles separate from their work.

Professional groups have guidelines for social media use. Staff should know the guidelines for their jobs. They should also know policies at their workplace.

When staff shares on social media, they can break privacy laws. They can also harm the facility's reputation. If inappropriate posts are found, like appearing intoxicated wearing facility logos, employment can be at risk.

Employees may not be allowed to use personal devices at work. Texting and scrolling can distract from providing care. However, using phones for scheduling and alerts may be approved.

## The American Nurses Association Offers Guidelines

- ⊙ Know your audience
- ⊙ Be professional
- ⊙ Be respectful
- ⊙ Know social media policies
- ⊙ Secure your profiles
- ⊙ Share only credible information



The ANA offers helpful guidelines for social media. Know your audience, be professional, be respectful, know your policies, secure your profile and only share credible information. This list shows the acceptable behavior.

Remember, every post should be suitable for the people who will see it. It should also be fine for people they may share it with. Lock down social media profiles to control who can see posts.

Never post inappropriate content. This includes photos or videos of residents. Never post content that is harmful, insulting, racist, or homophobic.

Such posts violate the rules of the ANA and state nursing boards. All staff members should know the social media policy of their facility.

## Medical Governing Body Guidelines: Professional Social Media Use

- ⊙ Confidentially
- ⊙ Avoiding defamation
- ⊙ Protecting privacy
- ⊙ Building public trust
- ⊙ Sound reasons to use social media



Medical governing bodies offer guidelines for the use of social media. These guidelines focus on lowering the risks of social media.

Like the ANA, these groups take social media use seriously. They emphasize five key themes.

1. Maintain confidentiality.
2. Avoid defaming others.
3. Protect privacy.
4. Uphold public trust.
5. Know the reasons to use social media.

## Health Care Workers Making an Online Presence

- They strive for humor
- They want to be influencers
- They share stories for marketing
- They provide health care information



More and more health care workers are building an online presence. Some want to be influencers. Some want to share knowledge. Some just want to be entertaining!

Nurse Blake is an influencer. 'Snarkynurses' is an Instagram platform for surveys and memes. Both share funny posts to entertain followers.

Other online presences, like #seniorliving and #seniorlivingstories, share stories of residents and caregivers. Some of the health care professionals on these sites provide helpful health information to the public.

Other posts showcase residents. All these residents have given their consent to be recorded and their information or photos posted. Some residents have even become online celebrities.

## Improper Use of Social Media

- ⊙ Making negative statements about the workplace, coworkers, or residents
- ⊙ Posting false information about the workplace
- ⊙ Using group texts to share misinformation or other harmful statements
- ⊙ Not using facility spokesperson



Social media is often misused. This misuse includes making negative posts about the workplace, residents, or coworkers. It also includes posting false information about the workplace and using group texts to share misinformation.

Words have power. And words can destroy the feeling of safety at work. An employee who is the target of online comments may feel unsafe at work. A hostile working environment can have an impact on care and services. Posts made about residents can hurt the resident, the family, and the workplace.

Direct caregivers should not speak to reporters or police who may post information. The facility should have an official spokesperson. Refer all questions to the spokesperson.



## Other Examples of Misuse of Social Media

- ⊘ Taking pictures of residents or staff
- ⊘ Posting any information that could violate HIPAA regulations
- ⊘ Posting work-related content without approval or consent



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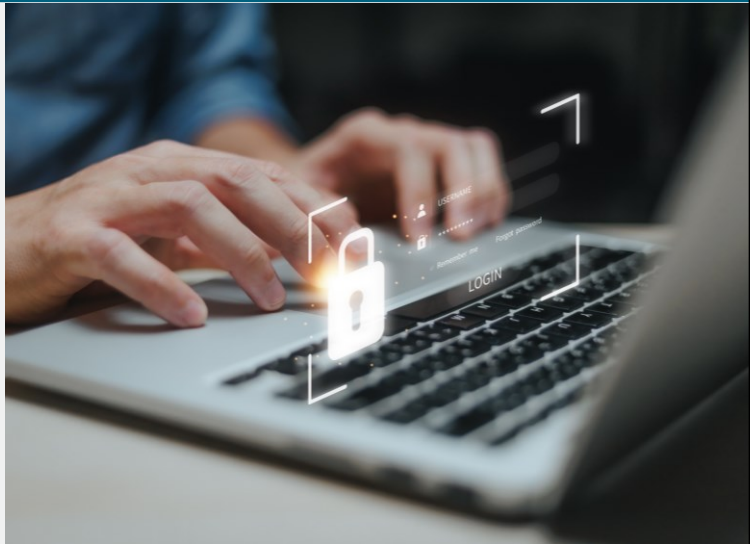
Many staff members use their personal cell phones with the best intentions. But they may still be violating HIPAA and workplace policies. Direct caregivers should know the organization's rules about social media.

Taking a selfie with a resident using a staff member's phone is inappropriate. What to do if the resident asks for a photo with the staff member? The staff member should use the resident's phone to take the picture. That way, the resident keeps control over the image.

Taking a picture of residents and sharing that photo on social media goes against HIPAA. This is true even if it is a work activity or social event. Residents must give consent to have their photo shared online.

## Use Social Media Controls

- ⊙ Understand controls for staff and residents
- ⊙ Limit the ability to comment on organizational sites
- ⊙ Protect privacy and security settings



Many facilities have social media controls for both staff and residents. Caregivers should know what the controls are. They should also understand why the controls are needed.

Some organizations block access to Facebook and other sites on the server. Only marketing staff can use these sites. This helps protect both staff and residents. It safeguards security.

Many residents and workers post or share content without bad intent. However, comments and visual clues can identify the resident and the facility. All workers must protect the privacy of residents.



## Examples of Inappropriate Use of Social Media

- Posting video of residents in vulnerable states
- Livestreaming residents without their consent
- Breaking trust with residents, staff, and the public



Inappropriate use of social media can be shocking. In one case, two nursing assistants posted a livestream. It showed the two of them abusing of an elderly resident with dementia. They posted this video on Snapchat. A viewer reported it to the police.

Police arrested the workers. They charged them with abuse of an elderly person, video voyeurism, and other crimes. The county sheriff said what they had done was vile. He called the assistants “disgusting.” Leaders at the facility did not know what had been happening. When they learned about it, they fired the two nursing assistants.

The employees horribly abused a helpless resident. They also violated resident privacy and public trust.

## Other Examples of Inappropriate Use of Social Media

- ⊗ Taking photos without permission or consent
- ⊗ Sharing photos of residents publicly
- ⊗ Posting identifying information without consent
- ⊗ Violating professional and workplace standards



There are many examples of inappropriate use of social media. These cases violated resident privacy, public trust, and federal laws. Some cases involve photos of people with cognitive problems. Cognitively impaired residents are not able to give consent.

Posted photos of residents have included people in demeaning situations. Some photos exposed genitals of residents. Other photos or comments identify diagnoses.

In one case, a worker took a photo of a resident's private parts. She sent it to a friend. That friend shared the photo on Facebook. She added a cruel comment. Both the worker and the friend were guilty.

In all instances, the facility fired the employees. In many instances, they were also charged with serious crimes.

## Direct Caregivers Should Keep High Standards

- ⊗ Staff-on-staff photos or videos
- ⊗ Posting derogatory comments
- ⊗ Posting photos in compromising situations
- ⊗ Sharing misinformation



Young people often share photos and videos of friends online. But no one should share images of coworkers on the job. The same goes for photos of residents.

If a family member asks a caregiver to take a photo of their loved one, decline. If they insist, ask a manager for help.

In general, make sure your social media reflects your best self. Avoid making crude comments on any post. Also avoid insulting or cruel comments.

Avoid posting photos of anyone abusing drugs or alcohol. Avoid posting photos of people doing anything compromising or illegal. Do not share misinformation, including news about health. Know that even in your private posts your employer could identify you.

## Health Care Facilities Need Strong Social Media Policies

- Medicare and Medicaid Services review nursing homes
- Facilities need clear policies and good training
- Public ratings of direct caregivers can impact facility reputation



Nursing homes are reviewed by Medicare and Medicaid as well as other government agencies. These reviews make sure that clear policies are in place. Agents want to know that staff understands the policies. The goal is always to protect the privacy of residents.

Direct caregivers should know the policies about social media. If needed, they should attend training. Good ratings for caregivers can add to the appeal of a facility.

Strong policies help build a better workplace. They also help caregivers protect themselves. Understanding policies helps avoid issues stemming from misuse of social media.

## Safety and Caution First!

- ⊖ Protect resident and staff privacy
- ⊖ Make sure your media platform is secure
- ⊖ Do not use identifying information



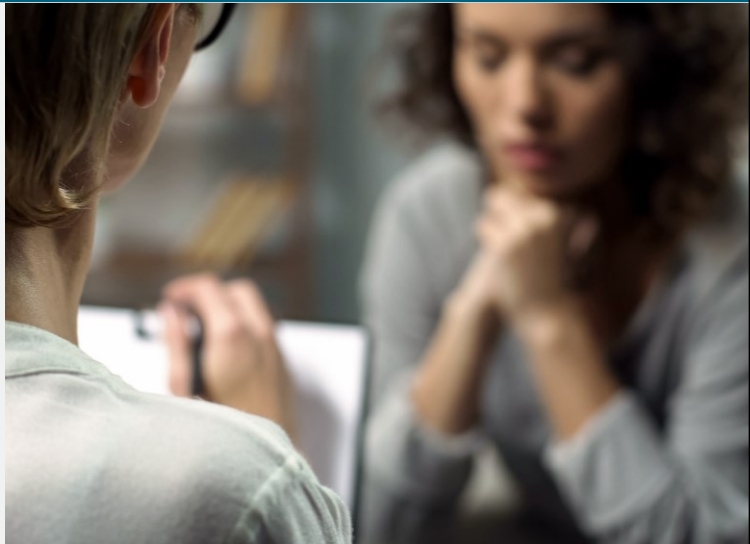
Another source of risk involves the use of social media to communicate directly with residents and families.

For example, a staff member shared updates with a resident's family. The messaging tool was not secure. As a result, private information was leaked.

Always be sure that your platform is secure. Email is not secure. Your facility should have a secure messaging program. Always use it for contacting families and others. It is key that only the intended recipients can access sensitive information. And understand that the person you are sending information to most likely does not have a secure platform.

## What if a Caregiver Violates Policies?

- ⊙ Counseling
- ⊙ Termination
- ⊙ Fines for the agency
- ⊙ Damaged reputations
- ⊙ Lawsuits from the resident and family
- ⊙ Lowered rating of the facility
- ⊙ Higher future insurance premiums



There are consequences when a staff member violates resident privacy. These can include counseling for the employee. The employee may be fired. The facility can be fined. Reputations can be damaged or destroyed. There may even be lawsuits. Facility ratings may drop and future insurance premiums may rise.

All employees must protect the privacy of residents. Think before you post. A Facebook post might state, “My 80-year-old resident refused her insulin today.” That post could reveal the identity of the resident.

A staff member might post, “I had a horrible day because you-know-who was on my shift.” That could make a coworker feel bullied. Posts like these promote an unsafe workplace for everyone.

Think before you post, every time.



## To Help Prevent Negative Posts in Public Media

- ⊙ Listen to residents and their families
- ⊙ Tell supervisors about resident complaints in a timely way
- ⊙ Take corrective action if you can
- ⊙ Show residents & families that you care
- ⊙ Focus on the positive



Direct caregivers can help prevent negative posts. Listen to residents and families. Are they frustrated? What are their complaints?

Share complaints with your supervisor as soon as possible. Work to make things better when you can.

Always show residents and their families that you care about them and will protect them. Focus on the positive.

All these actions will support good care and minimize angry or negative posts from residents, families, and staff members.

## Social Media has Many Positives for Staff and Residents

- ⊙ Creating connections
- ⊙ Making people feel seen and heard
- ⊙ Making it easier to connect with family and friends
- ⊙ Allowing participation in group activities



We have talked a lot about the pitfalls of social media. But there are many good points about it, too.

Social media helps people connect. It helps people feel seen. It is very useful for people who have difficulty getting out.

Social media can also improve social interaction. Zoom and FaceTime can connect a senior to a book club. With these tools, seniors may enjoy a bridge game or a family birthday party. They can attend a support group or a religious service.

Staff and residents can get to know each other better through social media. They can share photos, stories, and interests. This can strengthen the bond between caregiver and resident.



## Social Media can be a Positive Tool

- ⊙ Marketing
- ⊙ Sharing research and discovery
- ⊙ Promoting new services
- ⊙ Recruiting staff and residents.
- ⊙ Continuing education and training



Social media can be a very positive tool. It lets senior facilities share new ideas and research. It can be a good way to promote health and wellness.

The facility can use social media for marketing. Sharing programs and services can attract interest and goodwill. Good marketing can also help bring in new staff members.

Social media lets people see the services and programs offered at the facility. This can help bring in new residents.

Direct caregivers can support the facility's social media use. One way to do this is by sharing marketing posts on their own accounts. Direct caregivers can also take advantage of continuing education and training the organization provides through social media.

## Using Social Media to Highlight Facility Activities

- ⦿ Restrict commenting on the site
- ⦿ Obtain feedback



Facilities that post on social media or their own websites can set privacy limits. These limits may or may not allow readers to comment.

Negative comments can reflect poorly on the organization. On the other hand, positive comments can show the facility's strengths.

If the facility wants public feedback, it can post a survey. Surveys help gather comments in one place. Surveys of staff can also be helpful.

Senior leaders will decide the best ways to interact with the public. They will find the best ways to support the facility's goals and mission. Caregivers should understand and support the approach.

## How Should Seniors and Senior Living Agencies Use Social Media?

- ⊙ Post photos, videos, and vignettes
- ⊙ Share stories that are inspiring or humorous
- ⊙ Promote programs and services
- ⊙ Highlight residents and staff



Some senior living facilities use social media to highlight their residents, staff, and programs. Some have thousands of followers. And some of the seniors have become beloved celebrities.

On Instagram, search for #seniorlivingstories. Several sites will come up. Select a site and click on “View profile,” and you will see posts from a number of senior living agencies.

These posts are informative, inspiring, and humorous. All are created and posted with resident consent. They all follow facility social media policy. Some posts highlight staff and the good work they do.

## What can be Done to Protect Residents, Staff, and Families?

- ⦿ Develop policies
- ⦿ Implement safeguards
- ⦿ Provide training



All senior living facilities must adopt clear social media policies.

These policies are a code of conduct. They spell out what is appropriate and what is not allowed. They put safeguards in place. They list consequences for misuse of social media.

Direct caregivers should know the policies and follow them. Attend media training as required. Usually this training begins right after you are hired. Then there should be an annual training session. There may be more training when there is a major tech update.

Knowing your facility's policies, and following those policies, helps keep you safe. The policies also protect your coworkers, the residents, and the facility.

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on [nursing.ceconnection.com](https://nursing.ceconnection.com) to complete the post test.**