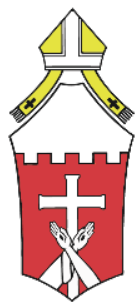


Social Media Guidelines



ARCHDIOCESE OF
SAN FRANCISCO

Social Media can no longer be considered a new form of communication; it is firmly established and growing, especially among the young. These guidelines will assist pastors, parishes, schools, and chancery departments in using social media to connect communities in safe and responsible ways.

The Vatican and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops offer encouragement and support in this area. From 2006 through 2014, the pope's World Communication Day message centered on social media, recognizing the opportunities for evangelization in this ubiquitous technology:

“The new communications media, if adequately understood and exploited, can offer priests and all pastoral care workers a wealth of data which was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and increased communion that were previously unthinkable. If wisely used...the new media can become – for priests and for all pastoral care workers – a valid and effective instrument for authentic and profound evangelization and communion.” Pope Benedict XVI, 2010

“By means of the internet, the Christian message can reach “to the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*). Keeping the doors of our churches open also means keeping them open in the digital environment so that people, whatever their situation in life, can enter, and so that the Gospel can go out to reach everyone.” Pope Francis, 2014

In the Archdiocese of San Francisco, parishes, schools, and chancery departments are encouraged to participate in digital communications through websites and social media. The Department of Communication developed these guidelines, drawing on those of the USCCB and other arch/dioceses, to assist pastors and others in managing these accounts responsibly and well.

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Guidelines

Accounts

There exist many different types of social media accounts. Choices of accounts should take into consideration suitability for intended purpose and audience, and sustainability. The latter is often overlooked because social media channels are free. Although they may not have monthly fees, they do require attention in the form of time and resources such as obtaining or writing the content for posts; obtaining appropriate photos and videos; monitoring; and responding to comments. Starting a communication channel that is then unattended can lead to many problems, including diminished interest in future efforts.

Account Security

Digital accounts – websites, email, social media, etc. – must be understood to be the property of the employer. Accounts may not exist without the permission of the pastor/administrator/supervisor. It is recommended that written acknowledgement be obtained from anyone who opens or manages such accounts; a sample form can be found in Appendix B.

Accounts must be managed by at least two adults, and anyone who manages an account should participate in Safe Environment Training. The pastor/administrator/supervisor or his/her delegate should be informed of everyone who has access, and should also have access.

These procedures will prevent situations where digital accounts cannot be accessed, and so display outdated, inaccurate, or – worst case scenario – inflammatory or derogatory information. They allow the pastor/administrator/supervisor to delete any individual as an account manager, should that become necessary, and to communicate directly with the account followers.

Communicating with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

The norms of Safe Environment for Children are applicable in digital communications.

- Parents must receive the same information children and youth receive. For example, if information is posted to a Youth Ministry Facebook page, parents must be able to view that page. If information is sent via text message or email, parents must be included in the distribution.

- Private messaging between an adult and a minor or vulnerable adult is not allowed. Two adults must always be included in such an exchange, as well as parents.
- Church communications must always take place over church communication channels, such as parish email or phone services. Adults should not provide their personal communication channels to minors and should not use those channels for church business.
- Channels that are publicly visible, including websites, must not contain personal and/or contact information about minors or vulnerable adults.
- Written permission must be obtained from parents or guardians before photographs of minors are posted. Always use first names only for identification.
- The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry recommends the following: “It is recommended that clear guidelines or parameters be established with regard to times of communication between adults and young people. While young people may be on the phone/texting in the late evening hours, those who minister with young people should pre-determine a timeframe when it is too late to take a professional call, except in the case of serious emergency. That timeframe should be communicated to the youth.”

Account Management

As mentioned above, it is important that digital communications be monitored. The information presented should be accurate and up-to-date, adhere to Catholic teaching, and respect privacy. Inquiries should receive a response in a reasonable period of time.

Digital channels should include the organization’s (parish, school, etc.) logo or recognizable image to indicate that it is an official channel of the organization.

Follow copyright, fair use, and IRS financial disclosure regulations.

Nothing on the internet is private: do not post confidential information.

Remember that these channels represent the Catholic faith. Practice charity. Do not post or share information that is unkind, inappropriate, or offensive.

If someone asks that their image be removed from a post, respect their request.

Maintain clear separation between personal and professional communications.

Do not use professional channels to promote outside business activities.

Do not reply to an inappropriate email or text message from anyone, especially a minor or vulnerable adult. Make a copy of the message and inform the pastor or administrator immediately.

Comments Policy

The reason social media is popular and successful is found in the word ‘social.’ The ability to interact is what keeps people interested and engaged in the channel. For this reason it is recommended that comments be allowed. Robust exchanges can, though, devolve when there is a difference of opinion. It is wise to include a Code of Conduct for all channels, and refer to it when necessary. Blocking or reporting users should be a seldom-used response to disagreements; usually a simple reminder to follow the posted Code is all that is necessary to keep an exchange at an acceptable level. An excellent example is the Code used on the USCCB Facebook page, which you are free to copy or adapt for your own use. It can be found in Appendix C.

Appendix D is a flowchart for handling problematic posts.

Appendix A: Glossary

App: Short for “application,” an app is a stand-alone program that performs a specific function. Apps are often offered as alternatives to full websites, with special design for optimal performance on mobile devices.

Blog: Contraction of the words “web” and “log,” a blog is an online journal.

Cyber-bullying: Using digital communications to intimidate, shame, or attack others.

Minor: Any person under the age of 18.

Pastor/Administrator/Supervisor: The individual in the highest position of authority at a parish, school, diocesan institution or entity.

Personnel: For purposes of these guidelines, “personnel” refers to employees and volunteers who administer digital communications.

Release: Signed permission from parents or guardians for use of photographs or video of minors or vulnerable adults.

Site Administrator: An individual who has responsibility for a website or social media channel.

SMS: Acronym for “short message service,” or texting.

Social Network: Digital communication channels that gather people together for shared communication. These are often based on communal interest, are web-based, and offer a variety of means of interaction such as chatting, messaging, and sharing photos and videos.

Text Messaging, Texting: Sending messages via smart phone.

Video Chatting: Social media using interactive video, such as Skype.

Vulnerable Adult: A dependent adult; one who lacks the legal capacity of an adult.

Website: A group of connected pages on the internet that constitute a whole and are owned and controlled by an administrator, for the desired purposes of an organization.

Appendix B: Account Manager Agreement



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Digital Media Account Manager Agreement

Digital/electronic media accounts that are established for the Archdiocese of San Francisco or any other school, organization, or entity of the Archdiocese of San Francisco are the property of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. The individual who establishes such accounts must share management access with at least one other individual, as approved by the Pastor/Administrator of the parish/school/organization/ other entity, or the Department of Communication. All images, videos, graphics, and text uploaded to such accounts are the property of the archdiocese and its organizations, and not the individual managers. In accordance with Social Media Guidelines, passwords and access must be shared with immediate supervisors and kept on file.

Upon termination of employment or volunteer relationship, the undersigned agrees to release control of the account, including any associated passwords.

The undersigned recognizes that the accounts are property of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and that he/she has a stewardship responsibility to control content in accordance with the Social Media Guidelines of the archdiocese. The undersigned will not delete nor damage any such accounts, or (mis)use them for personal gain.

I have read and understand this agreement:

Account Manager/Administrator

Supervisor

Date

Appendix C: Sample Terms of Use

From the USCCB Facebook page:

All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for the truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other posters. Discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective. No ads, please.

From the Archdiocese of San Francisco Comments Policy (all channels):

The purpose of this [Facebook] page is to provide an interactive forum where readers can gather and discuss information about the wide range of issues relating to Catholics in the San Francisco Bay Area, and more specifically to Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties, which constitute the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Followers are encouraged to post questions, comments, and concerns, but should remember this is a moderated online discussion hosted by the Archdiocese.

We appreciate healthy, constructive debate and discussion; that means we ask that comments be kept civil in tone.

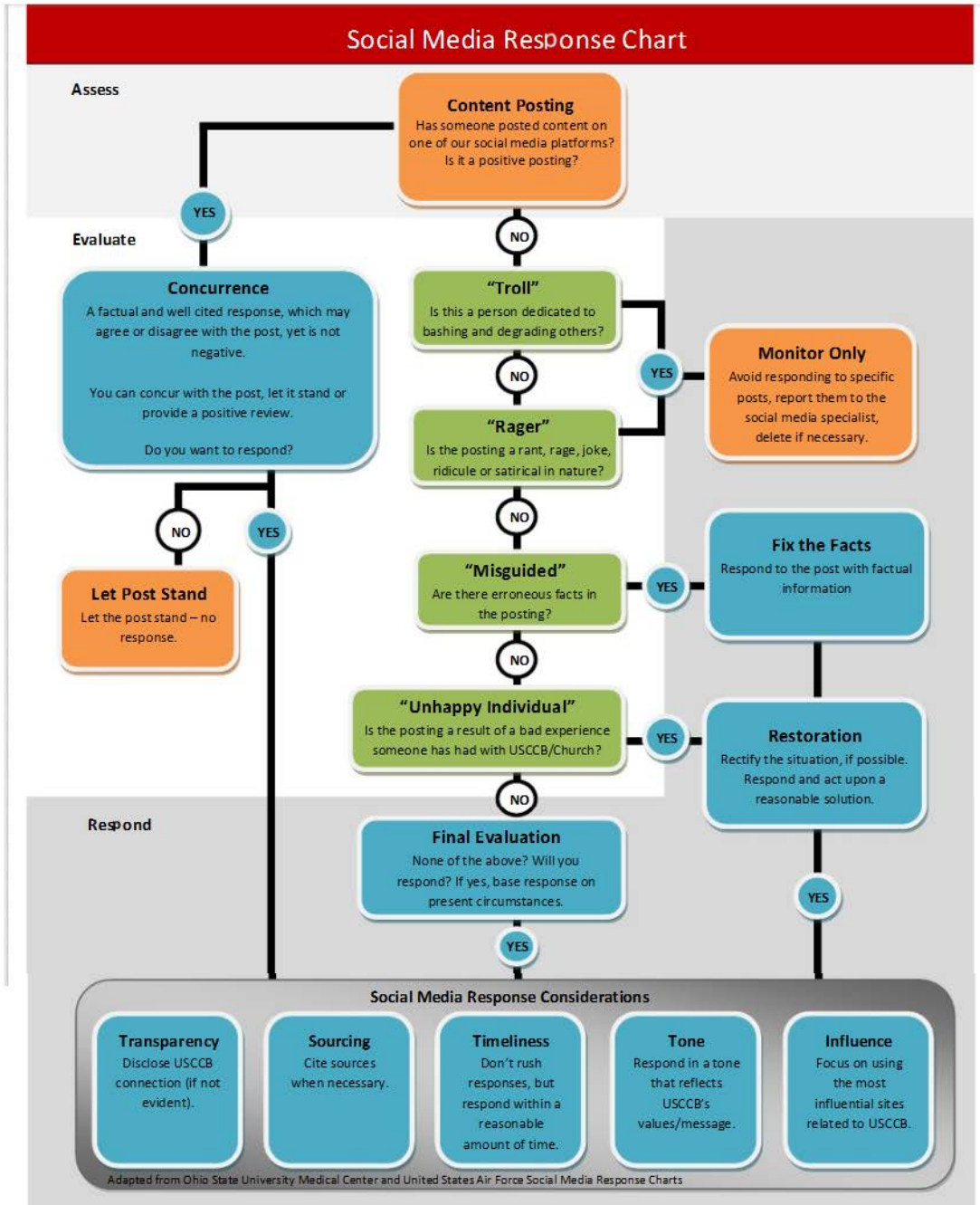
Comments will not be removed simply because they express opinions in disagreement with the Archdiocese or Archbishop. However, comments that may be deleted include those that contain:

- Vulgar language
- Personal attacks/inflammatory remarks against a person or group
- Content/comments off topic
- Spam
- Links to sites that contain offensive material or attack a person
- Promotion of services, products, political organizations/agendas
- Information that is factually incorrect

The Archdiocese reserves the right to remove posters who violate this policy.

Appendix D: USCCB Response Flowchart

(Substitute your organization for "USCCB" in the chart)



Appendix E: Additional Resources

FaithAndSafety.org -Technology Safety through the Eyes of Faith, a joint effort of the USCCB and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America faithandsafety.org

USCCB Social Media Guidelines usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm

Netsmartz411: Parents' and guardians' online resource for information on internet safety, computers, and the web. Netsmartz411.org

CyberTipline: The Congressionally mandated CyberTipline is a reporting mechanism for cases of child sexual exploitation including child pornography, online enticement of children for sex acts, molestation of children outside the family, sex tourism of children, child victims of prostitution, and unsolicited obscene material sent to a child. Reports may be made 24 hours per day, seven days per week, online at cybertipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678.