California Board of PSYCHOLOGY

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MEMORANDUM

DATE	August 5, 2016
TO	Board Members
FROM	Antonette Sorrick Executive Officer
SUBJECT	**Use of Social Media - Guidelines for Appropriate Use of Social Media**

Background:

Attached is a copy of the presentation given by Amigo Wade at ASPPB.

Action Requested:

This item is for informational purposes only, but may help facilitate discussion.

I. The Landscape

A. Government at all levels has increased the use of new technologies, in particular social media, for services and citizen and regulant interactions. This increased use is not only supported in many instances by legislative and executive branch initiatives, but also demanded by a public seeking greater access to and ease of interaction with government.

B. There are many benefits of using social media for services and interactions. Some of the benefits include:

1. Improving government transparency. Increased public access to agency information, records, and documents.

2. Encouraging citizen participation; increasing collaboration. Greater opportunities for input to be provided by citizens and interested parties in the agency's processes including rulemaking.

3. Improving operational efficiency.

4. Conducting regulatory investigations.

5. Creating online communities that follow the agency's work or business.

6. Cultivating professional connections.

7. Promoting timely communication with patients and family members.

8. Educating and informing consumers and health care professionals.

C. Incorporating social medial presents opportunity and risk, both associated with the unique business model of government. It is imperative to resist the temptation to proceed based on the opportunities a new technology will provide without a thorough review of the risks that are associated with adopting the new technology and compliance with existing constitutional and statutory mandates.

D. The decision to embrace any new technology should be a risk-based decision, not a technology-based decision. Ultimately, moving forward should be based on a successful review of the following areas:

1. The individual agency's mission.

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2. Existing statutory mandates- including those relating to free speech, open government, records retention, privacy protection, and accessibility.

3. Professional obligations and standards regarding patient privacy and possible threats.

4. Technical capabilities.

5. Staffing needs.

6. Potential benefits.

II. What is "social media?"

Social media describes a variety of web-based platforms, applications, and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. The sheer volume of use and information exchanged using social media makes its use by government agencies worthy of consideration.

A. Social networking sites. (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc).

B. Blogs and blog publication platforms. (Wordpress, Blogger, Tumblr, etc).

C. Microblogs. (Twitter and Yammer; also social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn also have a microblogging feature called "status update.")

D. Sharing sites for documents, video, and audio. (YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr, SlideShare, etc.).

III. Controlling the Risks

A. Guidelines and use policies. After a decision is made to embrace social media, it is critical for the agency to establish effective, proactive guidelines and policies. Users should be held to the same standards of professionalism, good taste, and judgment using social media as would apply to any other business communication. Without relevant guidelines or policies, there is the potential for the rapid spread of misinformation, unauthorized dissemination of private or sensitive material, and damaging interactions that may cause severe public relations problems. Complains alleging misuse of social media includes (i) breach of privacy or confidentiality against patients, (ii) failure to report violations committed by others, (iii) boundary violations, and (iv) employer use of social medial against employees.

B. Eight essential elements of an effective use policy

1. Employee access. A government agency has discretion to restrict access to areas of the Internet that are considered to be non-work related, including personal email and leisure

websites. This can be done by (i) controlling the number of employees who are allowed access to social media sites or (ii) limiting the types of sites that are approved for employee access.

2. Social media account management. An effective use policy provides for the creation, maintenance, and destruction of social media accounts. Account management will establish who may set up an agency social media account and a procedure for establishing an account.

3. Acceptable use. Typically, acceptable use policies detail the agency's rules regarding how employees are expected to use agency resources. Most agency guidelines should already make a clear distinction between an employee's work-related use of social media and an employee's personal use of the same. The users of any agency network should be held to the same standards of professionalism, good taste, and judgment when using electronic communications or social media sites. Specific policies should be aimed at controlling or mitigating personal use. For example, sporting pools, ticket or merchandise sales, or jokes, audio, or video correspondence that is strictly for entertainment purposes may be restricted.

4. Employee conduct. These policies relate to a standard code of conduct addressing such topics as offensive language, etc., and social media-specific policies that address transparency and openness and being respectful in all online transactions.

5. Content. This aspect of the policy would control who is allowed to post content on the official agency social media pages and who is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information on such pages.

6. Security. An effective use policy should include best practices to ensure the security of data and technical infrastructure in light of technologies related to social media use.

7. Legal issues. Policies in this area address the issues that are raised by the use of social media in terms of abiding by all existing laws and regulations.

8. Citizen conduct. If a government agency does allow for instant two-way public communications with citizens, rules for acceptable conduct of citizens should be developed. Such rules would address limitations on offensive language, inciting violence, or promoting illegal activity.

C. Acceptable use policies should include specific terms-of-use provisions that may restrict, for example:

1. Comments not topically related to the issue being commented upon.

2. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.

3. Profane language or content or sexual content or links to sexual content.

4. Content that promotes or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or any other protected class under state or federal law.

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5. Comments that encourage illegal conduct or activity.

6. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

7. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of another party.

IV. Preparation: Agency Checklist

A. Clearly define your objectives. Is your intent to highlight content, generate participation, encourage awareness of an issue, or simply make information available? Clearly defined objectives will help to determine which form of social media would be most efficient and effective to use.

B. Know your target audience. It is important to define your intended audience so that you may develop and communicate messages that will resonate with that audience. Tailoring messages, including audio and video content, to match the desired audience will aid the dissemination process.

C. Determine your resource needs. Determine very early in the process if you have appropriate staffing resources to create and manage online content and to serve as a point of contact for online activities.

D. Keep your content appropriate. The content should be appropriate to the form of social media that is chosen. For example, the maximum character limit for a tweet is 140 characters. Just as with any other agency communication, content should be clear and consistent with the stated objective.

E. Evaluate. Periodic evaluation is an integral component of all social media activities. This includes (i) reviewing objectives and adjusting them as needed, (ii) identifying lessons learned, and (iii) determining whether the effort is successfully meeting the stated goals.

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