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## Procedure for Use of Social Media

**1.0 Purpose** - The North Carolina State Crime Laboratory (Laboratory) endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Laboratory's position on the use of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

**2.0 Scope** – This procedure shall apply to all personnel of the Laboratory.

### 3.0 Definitions

- **Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log.”
- **Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- **Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on site.
- **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (e.g., Twitter, Nixle), photo and video-sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, Vine), and wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and news sites (e.g., Digg, Reddit).
- **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- **Speech:** Expression of communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- **Web 2.0:** The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.
- **Wiki:** Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

**4.0 Overview** - Social media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting the Laboratory and its employees in community outreach and recruiting objectives. This policy identifies potential uses of social media that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory employees. The Laboratory also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some Laboratory employees. The personal use of social media can have bearing on Laboratory employees in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Laboratory employees.

### 5.0 On the Job Use

#### 5.1 Sanctioned Use

**5.1.1** All Laboratory social media sites or pages(s) shall be approved by the Director or designee.

**5.1.2** Where possible, social media pages shall indicate clearly that they are maintained by the Laboratory and shall display department contact information prominently.

**5.1.3** Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

**5.1.4** Content is subject to public records laws.

**5.1.5** Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

**5.1.6** Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinion of the Laboratory.

**5.1.7** Laboratory employees representing the Laboratory via social media outlets shall do the following:

**5.1.7.1** Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and, accordingly, shall adhere to all DOJ and Laboratory standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.

**5.1.7.2** Identify themselves as a member of the Laboratory.

**5.1.7.3** Laboratory employees representing the Laboratory via social media outlets shall not do the following:

**5.1.7.3.1** Make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to DOJ or Laboratory training, activities, or work-related assignments.

**5.1.7.3.2** Conduct political activities or private business.

**5.1.7.3.3** Laboratory employees, who use Laboratory computers to access social media, shall adhere to guidelines set forth by the *North Carolina Best Practices for Social Media Usage* manual.

**5.1.7.4** Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

#### **5.1.8 Potential Use**

**5.1.8.1** Social media may be used for community outreach and recruiting by providing a link to:

**5.1.8.1.1** Vacant job postings;

**5.1.8.1.2** DOJ press releases regarding the State Crime Laboratory; and

**5.1.8.1.3** Activities related to community outreach programs in which lab employees have participated including, but not limited to, Special

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Olympics, Police Benevolence, middle school and high school enrichment programs, and collegiate forensic science programs.

**5.1.8.2** Social media and other Internet-based content may be used when conducting background investigations of job candidates.

**5.1.8.2.1** Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.

**5.1.8.2.2** Persons authorized to search Internet-based content shall be deemed as holding a sensitive position.

**5.1.8.2.3** Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.

**5.1.8.2.4** Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.

**5.1.8.2.5** Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

## **6.0 Personal Use**

**6.1 Precautions and Prohibitions** - Laboratory employees are cautioned that speech, on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties may not constitute protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Laboratory.

**6.2** Laboratory employees shall abide by the following guidelines when using social media outlets:

**6.2.1** Laboratory employees may express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not constitute conduct which:

**6.2.1.1** Tends to bring the DOJ or Laboratory into disrepute;

**6.2.1.2** Reflects discredit upon any employee of the DOJ;

**6.2.1.3** Tends to impair the operation and efficiency of the DOJ, Laboratory or its employees;

**6.2.1.4** Impairs an employee's ability to complete work assignments objectively and diligently or to handle classified or confidential information.

**6.2.2** When using social media, Laboratory employees shall be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Laboratory employees are prohibited from:

**6.2.2.1** Speech containing obscene and sexually explicit language, images of acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.

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**6.2.2.2** Speech involving themselves or other Laboratory employees reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or a violation of DOJ or Laboratory values and principles.

- 6.3** Laboratory employees may have personal web pages or sites; however, references to or about the Laboratory that may compromise the agency's integrity are prohibited. This includes posting, transmitting and/or disseminating any photographs, video or audio recordings, likenesses or images of Laboratory logos, emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment or other material that specifically identifies the Laboratory on any personal or social networking website or web page without the express written permission of the Laboratory Director or designee.
- 6.4** No employee shall represent himself or herself, directly or indirectly, in any public forum as a member of the Laboratory, either by text, photograph or image depicting the uniform, badge, or patch in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character.
- 6.5** No employee shall represent himself or herself in any public forum as a member of the Laboratory with other information, opinion or posture that would bring unfavorable criticism or embarrassment upon the Laboratory or the DOJ. In addition, no employee will represent his or her opinions or comments as that of the DOJ or Laboratory or as an official of the DOJ or Laboratory. This includes, but is not limited to, any posting that would discriminate or imply discrimination against any person or group based on age, ancestry, belief, race, creed, disability, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or veteran status.
- 6.6** No employee shall post images or text that identifies other personnel as employees of the DOJ or Laboratory without consent from that employee.
- 6.7** When using the internet, social networking sites or other medium of communication, employees shall adhere to Laboratory policies and State and Federal statutes governing confidentiality of information, as well as those policies governing contacts with journalistic media and the public. No information shall be divulged that would not otherwise be made public. Any employee who becomes aware of or has knowledge of a posting and/or social networking site in violation of this policy shall immediately notify his or her Supervisor.
- 6.8** Employees are prohibited from posting, broadcasting or otherwise disseminating any content that would likely impair the reputation of the Laboratory or DOJ.
- 6.9** While working, an employee may use personal social networking in order to communicate briefly with family or other individuals as he or she might communicate by telephone, email or text. These communications must be brief and must not interfere with the employee's work.
- 6.10** Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet postings on future employment, cross examination in court, and public or private embarrassment.
- 6.11** Any employee who violates the conditions of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

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Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
08/29/2014	1	Original Document