SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

[Note: This document does not aim to provide a step-by-step "how to" on creating and using the specific features of social media channels. Such guides can be found in the Scouting America Social Media Playbook. Additionally, social media changes regularly, so this document reflects the current guidelines determined by Scouting America and is subject to modifications and amendments as required.]

INTRODUCTION

It is an exciting time to be part of Scouting America. One reason is that new communication vehicles enable current and past Scouts and Scouters, and those interested in Scouting, to communicate directly with each other about Scouting. Facebook, X, YouTube, and other social media tools have enabled anyone with an Internet connection to create and join online communities where people can discuss Scouting and share stories, photos, videos, and other media types.

Although using social media is not a Scouting activity, their use to connect with others interested in Scouting can be a positive experience. However, creating and maintaining these channels requires forethought, care, and responsibility. Therefore, Scouting America has developed guidelines to help you navigate social media channels. These guidelines complement Scouting America's existing Youth Protection policies and training.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH PROTECTION

First, everyone should review and strictly adhere to each social media channel's terms of service and existing guidelines (e.g., Facebook, X, YouTube, etc.). As is true for Scouting activities, all Scouts and adult leaders should abide by the guidelines outlined in the Scout Oath and Law when participating in social networking. As with a Scouting activity, safety and Youth Protection should be a key focus. Staying true to Scouting America's commitment to advocate for youth and keep children and their privacy safe, both online and off, should always be at the forefront of any considerations regarding social media usage.

Social media channels must be public, and all communication on or through them must be public to help ensure that all communication remains positive and safe. This policy enables administrators to monitor all communication and help ensure no inappropriate communication between adult leaders and Scouts or between Scouts. Therefore, no private channels (e.g., private Facebook groups or invitation-only YouTube channels) are acceptable for administering the Scouting program. Private channels and private communication put both the youth and you at risk. If you feel the information you seek to share via social media channels should not be made public, you should not share that information via social media.

Abiding by the "two deep" leadership policy that governs all Scouting activities also applies to the use of social media. Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings. There must be a registered female adult leader 21 years

of age or over in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth. Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age- and program-appropriate supervision must always be provided.

Regarding social media, two-deep leadership means there should be no private messages and no one-on-one direct contact through email, Facebook messages, X direct messaging, chats, instant messaging (Google Messenger, AIM, etc.), or other similar messaging features provided through social media sites. All communication between adults and youth should be in a public forum (e.g., the Facebook wall). At a bare minimum, electronic communication between adults and youth should always include one or more authorized adults openly "copied" (included) on the message or message thread.

While all communication should be public, and leaders should follow the "two-deep" rule while communicating via social media channels, it is recommended that you and your group members create personal social media profiles. The personal information on these profiles should be kept private (e.g., do not display your phone number, address, or personal email address on these profiles). It is recommended that any Scouts with personal profiles for social media make those profiles "private," so the Scout's personal information is not accessible to the public. In creating personal profiles, everyone should familiarize themselves with and abide by the terms of service of the sites where they create and maintain personal profiles.

INTERNET SAFETY GUIDELINES

Any Scout units that plan to use social media should share the following Internet safety guidelines with Scouts, parents, and leaders, and all Scouts should abide by the following Internet safety guidelines and personal protection rules:

- Keep online conversations with everyone in public places, not via email.
- Do not give anyone online your last name, phone numbers at home or school, your parents' workplaces, or the name or location of your school or home address unless you have your parents' permission first. Never give your password to anyone but a parent or other adult in your family.
- Trust your instincts if someone sends or shows you an email, direct message, or wall post with sayings that make you uncomfortable. You are right to be wary. Do not respond. Tell a parent or trusted adult what happened.
- If somebody tells you to keep what is going on between the two of you a secret, tell a parent or guardian.
- Be careful to whom you talk. Anyone who starts talking about subjects that make you uncomfortable may be an adult posing as a kid.
- Pay attention if someone tells you things that do not fit together. If one time an online "friend" says they are 12, another time says they are 14, that is a warning that this person is lying and may be an adult posing as a kid.
- Unless you talk to a parent about it first, never talk to anybody by phone if you only know that person online. If someone asks you to call—even if it is a collect or toll-free 800 number—that is a warning. That person can get your phone number from a phone bill or caller ID.

- Never agree to meet someone you have met only online, in the real world.
- Watch out if someone online starts talking about "hacking," breaking into other people's or a company's computer systems); "phreaking" (the illegal use of long-distance services or cellular phones); or viruses (online programs that destroy or damage data when other people download these onto their computers).
- Promise your parent or an adult family member and yourself that you will honor any rules about how much time you are allowed to spend online, what you do, and where you go while you are online.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE

For practical considerations, the BSA expects adults intending to use social media on behalf of Scouting to follow the following:

- Monitor social media channels regularly. A qualified staff member or volunteer should be responsible for monitoring social media channels daily, and backup administrators/ monitors should be designated so there is no gap in the monitoring.
- Integrate your communications. Create a strategy to surround your intended audience with your key message(s) through print, the Web, email, radio, TV, word of mouth, and social media.
- Talk to your audience and let them talk to and about you. By posting content on a consistent schedule, you can tell your story and encourage conversations in the community.
- Social media takes thick skin. Negative conversations are already happening, but now you have a voice.
- Do not delete negative comments unless they violate the terms laid out in the BSA Social Media Digital Contract.
- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if a response is warranted. Some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed. The number of followers and the severity of the conversations should temper if and how you respond.
- Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Scout executive or a designee for an official response.
- Be Scout-like. When disagreeing with others' opinions, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in an online situation that looks like it is becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive, and do not abruptly disengage from the conversation. Ask your Scout executive or the designee for advice on politely disengaging from the dialogue in a way that reflects well on Scouting America.
- Build trust by being open and transparent. Share information and the challenges and opportunities for Scouting in your community.

KEY SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE

There are many social media channels available to users. New channels are being introduced frequently. As such, it would be impossible to provide information on all of them. We will focus on

three of the most popular and most applicable to Scouting. Those channels are Facebook, X, and YouTube.

Facebook

Facebook is an effective way to form online communities where groups of people can gather to have conversations and share information. Indeed, the Scouting America National Council, many local councils, and some units already use Facebook to communicate about Scouting. Of course, creating and maintaining a Facebook page for your council or unit is a big responsibility and should not be entered into lightly.

It may be valuable to think of a Facebook page as a little like a troop meeting that is always open, always going on, and where members of the public may drop by and watch or participate at any time of day or night. That means Scouts and Scouters can be even more involved in sharing the fun and excitement of Scouting and be more active in the group discussion—even when they are at home. But it is also easy to see how, if left unstructured or unattended by Scout leaders, this never-ending meeting could quickly become a problem.

When considering whether Facebook might be a good option for your council or unit, it is necessary to remember that Facebook requires all users to be at least 13 years of age. Before creating a Facebook page, you should educate yourself about how organizations use Facebook. Please familiarize yourself with its terms of service to help you navigate your fan page development carefully.

When creating a Facebook page, you should make it a public fan page. In addition, you should designate at least two administrators with access to the login, password, and page management/ monitoring information. This conforms to the Scouting America "two-deep" leadership policies. At least one of these page administrators should be a Scouting America local council employee, or a registered volunteer who has taken Youth Protection training. All Youth Protection policies that govern the use of email apply to the use of the messaging capabilities of Facebook.

The biggest strength of Facebook is also its biggest weakness: Facebook fan pages are open to the public, meaning anyone can view any information shared on that fan page. As such, you should ensure that any information shared on that page by you or your fans is appropriate to share with the public. This approach is especially true regarding the level of detail you provide regarding Scouts and their activities.

For the Info Tab of your Facebook page, you should use the guidelines set forth on the Scouting America National Council Facebook Info Tab in its Digital Contract, found here: https://www.facebook.com/pg/theboyscoutsofamerica/about/?ref=page_internal

Once you have created a Facebook fan page, invited people to "like" your page, and started gathering "fans," it is essential for you to post positive and appropriate content. Monitor the content posted to your wall. Unfortunately, not all the content posted to the wall by your fans may be appropriate. All content posted by you or fans on the Facebook wall should conform to the precepts of the Scout Oath and Law. Content that does not meet that standard should be removed immediately. If a user posts highly offensive content, the content should be removed immediately,

and you may need to block or ban the user who posted it. Such an action should not be used liberally but only when the content is truly objectionable.

This type of careful monitoring requires vigilance. Before creating a Facebook page, you should consider whether you or someone who will administer the page will commit time to monitor that page and post content consistently to help ensure that only appropriate content is posted. Pages with inconsistent and infrequent updates can cause your fans to become disinterested, and your page can become a target for spammers or predatory parties who recognize that you are not actively monitoring your page.

As with any online site, you must not give out personal information about Scouts or Scouters to anyone on Facebook. Every effort should be made to help ensure that your fans and those Scouts and Scouters that use the Facebook page are protected. Keeping Scouts and their private information safe should be the primary concern in any endeavor involving them—whether keeping them safe on a camping trip or on the unit's Facebook fan page.

X (formerly known as Twitter)

Because of its 280-character-per-post limit and relative lack of multimedia capabilities, X is designed for quick, simple updates. It can be used like instant messaging or email to have conversations with one or more people in a mostly public forum.

X can be a suitable place to share quick observations, provide updates about programs, share training deadlines, link to other websites with event details, share great Scouting stories, and have informal conversations with followers. In general, X has a more personal voice, meaning posts on X are expected to be informal and friendly. It is also important to remember that X is a public forum and is viewable by anyone. That means content placed on X should be acceptable to your specific intended audience of followers and a wider audience.

Some direct-messaging capabilities exist with X; however, adults should not use these direct-messaging capabilities when dealing with Scouts. All Youth Protection policies that govern the use of email apply to the messaging capabilities of X. Before starting an X account for your council or unit, familiarize yourself with X's terms of service and adhere to those guidelines.

When creating an X account for your unit or council, you should designate at least two administrators with access to the login, password, and page management/ monitoring information. This conforms to Scouting America's "two-deep" leadership policies. At least one of these page administrators should be a Scouting America local council employee or a registered volunteer who has taken Youth Protection training.

In addition, all content posted on your X account should align with the Scout Oath and Law. Never "tweet" (post) un-Scout-like content or respond to a tweet in an un-Scout-like manner to anyone interacting with you through your X account.

X should be updated regularly and closely watched so responses can be provided to people requesting information or trying to start a conversation.

YouTube

YouTube is primarily a video-hosting and -viewing platform. It lets you upload videos to a channel you manage. Once on your YouTube channel, each video has an individual URL and can be viewed on YouTube, shared as a link, or embedded (by you, your fans, and members of the public) via other social media outlets and on websites. Before starting a YouTube channel for your council or unit, familiarize yourself with the site's terms of service and adhere to those guidelines.

When creating a YouTube channel, your channel must be public. There should be no private groups. In addition, you should designate at least two administrators with access to the login, password, and page management/ monitoring information. This conforms to Scouting America's "two-deep" leadership policies. At least one of these page administrators should be a Scouting America local council employee or a registered volunteer who has taken Youth Protection training.

Like the other social media channels, the public can access your videos and may view and comment on them unless you set viewing restrictions in your settings. If you enable comments, you should monitor them regularly to be sure they are appropriate. YouTube also has messaging features (like email). All Youth Protection policies that govern the use of email apply to the messaging capabilities of YouTube.

A YouTube channel is an effective way to share videos of events, how-to videos, awards ceremony videos, and other videos that would be good to share with members of the group and the public.

An important consideration for YouTube or any similar site that features videos or images of Scouts is that all videos/images should adhere to recommended Youth Protection policies and protect individual Scouts' privacy. Additionally, all videos should show Scouts and leaders following designated appropriate guidelines and wearing proper attire for whatever activity is undertaken in the video. All safety and Youth Protection policies must be followed for any Scouting activities, including those captured on video.

Final Thoughts

It is important to remember that all social media channels are, by nature, designed to be social, that is, shared with members of the public. As such, whatever social media activities you engage in should be completed with the understanding that the public will see them and may engage in an online dialogue with you. Do not do anything on a social media channel that reflects poorly on you, other individuals in your council or unit, the Boy Scouts of America, or anyone else. Before posting any content on any social media channel, you should ask yourself if that content is in keeping with the precepts of the Scout Oath and Law.

As an additional consideration, once created social media channels and the content on them "live forever" on the Internet, sometimes even if the accounts have been deleted. That means social media channels created today may still exist five, 10, or 15 years from now, in some cases long after those who started them are no longer involved directly with Scouting. As such, consider transitioning administration rights and duties when the initial administrators end their direct involvement in Scouting.

Also, organizations wishing to use social media must accept that listening is just as important as speaking on these channels. Those wishing to participate in this space should be prepared to listen if they are to reap any value.

Social media can be a powerful tool for sharing the joys and triumphs of Scouting, but if not executed properly, it can be detrimental to everything Scouting represents. As such, engage in social media activities wisely. Also, realize that social media is a new and evolving form of communication that requires flexibility, patience, and commitment. Still, the rewards of increased connection with and understanding of your target audience can be significant.

In your social media communications, you should be clear that it is not an official Scouting America social media channel but your personal channel. You can use the following template as an example:

> "This site is the personal [reference your specific social media channel] of [your name or organization] and is reflective only of my personal views, thoughts, and opinions. This site does not have the endorsement of the Boy Scouts of America, and it is not an official communication channel of the Boy Scouts of America."

If you have questions regarding any of the guidelines and/or recommendations or concerning using a specific social media channel not covered here, please get in touch with the Scouting America National Council social media team at social.media@scouting.org for further guidance.