Social Media

POLICY NUMBER: NDIS STAFF 8

INTENT

The purpose of this policy is to outline the issues and responsibilities of all employees, including management, volunteers and contractors, to meet legal requirements with privacy and confidentiality laws relating to the parameters of employment, service operations and confidentiality agreements with Participants, work colleagues and the Service in relation to social media.

This policy will assist Real Living Options Association Inc. employees when using social media in the following capacities:

- Adding content to official Real Living Options Association Inc. social media pages.
- Creating online support groups or providing information sharing as a representative of Real Living Options Association Inc.
- Making references to Real Living Options Association Inc. within a personal capacity on a social media platform.

This policy does not apply to Real Living Options Association Inc. employees in their personal use of social media platforms where the employee does not refer to Real Living Options Association Inc. and or current services.

DEFINITION

Social media - *Social media platforms allow users to share and upload media content such as photographs and videos (with comments) to the internet quickly and easily. Social networks are one of the fastest-growing areas in modern communications technology and effectively encourage a two-way conversation with stakeholders.*

Some examples are:

- *Social Networking sites such as Facebook, X, Skype, Instagram*
- *Blogs such as Tumblr and e-news*
- *Video and photo sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube*
- *Micro Blogs such as X*
- *Weblogs*
- *Forums, discussion boards and webinars*
- *Encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia*
- *Online communities*

Internet: *Also known as the Net, is the single worldwide computer network that interconnects other computer networks, on which end-user services, such as World Wide Web sites or data archives are located, enabling data and other information to be exchanged.*

Communication: *An instance or instances of the transmission or exchange of information, knowledge, or ideas, by means of speech, writing, mechanical or electronic media.*

Purpose of social media

Employees must be aware that content published online and on social media is, or may become, publicly available, even from personal social media accounts. When referencing Real Living Options Association Inc. on social media, the Service expects employees to take reasonable steps to ensure that their social media use and public comments fall within the following parameters:

- Be professional and respectful.
- Promote the values and beliefs of Real Living Options Association Inc.
- Educate and inform.
- Not include misleading or deceptive statements or inferences.
- Connect with local services that will assist members of the Real Living Options Association Inc. social media community.
- Only include intellectual property (such as photos, videos and quotes) that Real Living Options Association Inc. has permission to use or that do not require permission to use.
- Comply with Real Living Options Association Inc.'s Privacy Policy.
- Promote events by creating event pages and inviting Participants and volunteers of Real Living Options Association Inc. to attend.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- Only authorised employees and/or nominated Management Committee members may post on behalf of Real Living Options Association Inc.
- Real Living Options Association Inc. is committed to ensuring communication regarding the Service, in the course of working or volunteering for the Service or that implicates the Service and/or its stakeholders, is at all times appropriate and in accordance with its Service Principles, Policies and Procedures.
- Any content published must:
    - Promote services, events, and activities in a truthful and inclusive manner
    - Avoid discriminatory, misleading, or inappropriate content
    - Be reviewed by the General Manager before posting (where applicable)
- Except in necessary work related and/or emergency situations the employees of Real Living Options Association Inc. must not engage in the use of personal and/or private communication, including but not limited to emails, use of social media, phone calls and texting during the hours an employee or volunteer is employed or engaged.
- Real Living Options Association Inc. prefers that employees do not list Real Living Options Association Inc. as their employer on social media. However, where this is done, employees must strictly adhere to appropriate conversations, pictures, videos and standards of conduct which do not have the potential to reflect negatively on any aspect of the Service.

- In situations where any communication affects a person while they are working for the Service, the communication may become work related and the policies of the Service may become applicable.
- All employees of Real Living Options Association Inc. MUST gain consent from the Participant or their Representative/Nominee before posting any images or identifying information about the Participant.

PROCEDURES

The following principles apply to the professional use of social media on behalf of Real Living Options Association Inc. and personal use of social media when referencing Real Living Options Association Inc. or its employees and Participants.

- Employees must adhere to Real Living Options Association Inc. Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook, and other Service policies when using social media about Real Living Options Association Inc.
- Employees must be aware of their actions effect on their reputation and the reputation of Real Living Options Association Inc. The information that employees post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- Employees must observe content and information made available by management through social media. Employees should use their best judgement in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to Real Living Options Association Inc. its employees and or Participants.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, defamatory images, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- Employees are not to publish, post or release any information considered confidential or not public. Employees should check with the General Manager or their immediate supervisor if there are questions about what is considered confidential.
- Social media networks, blogs and other online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to the General Manager.
- Employees encountering a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic should disengage from the dialogue politely and seek the advice of a supervisor.
- Employees must seek permission before referring to or posting images of current or former employees, Participants, vendors or suppliers. Additionally, Employees should get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property. Use of Participant and employee's images requires written consent before publication.
- Do not 'friend' or follow Participants on personal accounts unless approved as part of a documented support plan.
- Maintain professional boundaries in all digital interactions.
- Report any online behaviour that may compromise Participant safety or Service integrity.
- When using personal social media, employees must:

- Not post about Participants or their families, even if well-intentioned, unless expressly authorised and consented to in writing.
- Avoid discussing workplace matters, disputes, or confidential information.
- Refrain from making disparaging remarks about the NDIS, the Service, its staff, or Participants.
- Never post photos taken in a Participant's home or during support shifts without formal consent and management approval.
- Personal opinions must not be presented as the views of the Service.

- Social media use must not interfere with employee responsibilities. Real Living Options Association Inc. technology and computer systems are to be used for business purposes only by designated people. Social media is permitted for business purposes using Real Living Options Association Inc. computer systems.
- Personal use of the Service's social media networks or personal blogging of online content is prohibited, and disciplinary action may be undertaken.
- Subject to applicable laws, after-hours online activity that violates Real Living Options Association Inc. Code of Conduct or any Policy may subject employees to disciplinary action and/or termination.
- Under no circumstances may employees of Real Living Options Association Inc. make purchases online on behalf of a Participant.

- Any breach of this policy will be addressed in accordance with Real Living Options Association Inc.'s disciplinary procedures and may result in:
  - Removal of content
  - Formal warning
  - Termination of employment or contract

Reporting to the NDIS Commission (where relevant)

DELEGATIONS

Management Committee

- Liaise with the General Manager where applicable.

General Manager

- Implement and communicate this policy and workplace practice to all employees and volunteers.
- Apply the relevant polices and disciplinary procedures in the event of non-compliance or omission.
- Report to the Management Committee any significant instances of a breach of this policy
- Determine which social media platforms are most appropriate for the Service to engage in.
- Ensure as far as practicable that all posts on the Services social media pages are in keeping with the Services mission, core values, and policies

- Ensure as far as practicable that appropriate and timely action is taken to correct or remove inappropriate posts from the Services social media (including defamatory and/or illegal content), and to minimise the risk of a repeat incident.
- Ensure as far as practicable that appropriate and timely action is taken to repair relations with any persons or Services offended by an inappropriate post.
- Moderating and monitoring public response to social media, such as blog comments and Facebook replies, to ensure that trolling and spamming does not occur, to remove offensive or inappropriate replies, or caution offensive posters, and to reply to any further requests for information generated by the post topic.
- Developing a strategy for expanding the Services social media footprint over time.

Support Manager, HR and WHS Officer and Support Facilitators

- Implement and communicate this policy and workplace practice to all employees at a lower level.
- Apply the relevant polices and disciplinary procedures in the event of non-compliance or omission.
- Report to the General Manager any significant instances of a breach of this policy

Employees and Volunteers

- Adhere to this policy
- Report any suspected breaches of this policy to the Support Manager or General Manager
- Report any suspected misuse of social media and/or the internet to the Support Manager or General Manager

RELATED DOCUMENTATION
NDIS GOV 15 Code of Conduct Policy
Code of Conduct Document
NDIS STAFF 11 Misconduct and Discipline Policy

REFERENCES
Privacy Act 1998
NDIS Code of Conduct

AMENDMENTS/REVIEWS

13/06/2013, 23/02/2014, 30/05/2019, 28/072022, 27/10/2022, 06/11/2025