

Guidelines for the Use of Social Media by DSWE Students

As a student in the Department of Social Work Education at Fresno State, you are in the process of becoming either a beginning (BA) or advanced (MSW) level social worker professional. An important aspect of your professional development is your image and conduct. The technological and social media options available to us now are an important part of your professional presentation. It is important to understand the benefits and potential problems with social media use as you move forward in your social work career.

The NASW Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education competencies provide guidance on professional conduct in terms of dual relationships, conflict of interest, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, professional boundaries and other domains of professional behavior. Social work students and professionals are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and to practice within the legal, ethical and practice guidelines of the educational institution, the field placement agency, and/or the agency of employment. Clearly differentiating between your personal and professional self is an important aspect of your professionalism.

Here are some general guidelines to consider in your use of social media as a social work student.

PACE yourself by being:

- Professional:** Follow all university, agency and professional guidelines for conduct.
Exercise clear boundaries between your professional and personal life, (i.e don't "friend" clients of Facebook).
Use high level of privacy setting on social media but clearly understand that social networking is in the public domain so there is no real privacy.
- Accurate:** Be sure that anything you post is true and factual.
Use good writing skills that reflect your educational level.
- Considerate:** Always use a respectful tone in all social media interaction.
Remember that as a professional, you represent yourself but you also represent your university, your field placement agency and the social work profession.
- Extra Careful:** Think twice before you post – if you wouldn't say it, don't post it!
Online communications are lasting – you can't take them back.
Consider the consequences for you as a person and as a professional.