

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
PHOENIX VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORK 18
PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB 2.0 POLICY

July 31, 2009

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish social media policy and procedures and share the semantics for such interaction with employees, the community, the media, our patients and general public.

- II. **POLICY:** The role of the Public Affairs Office at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) is to serve as the stakeholder relations expert between the PVAHCS and the internal and external publics. Thus the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) will maintain all aspects of the social media program and ensure high quality communications between the PVAHCS and the public through the use of the social media communication tools. The responses and information put forth through these tools are consistent with PVAHCS leadership views and intertwined in developing these relations between the PVAHCS and the general public and other organizations.

- III. **PROCEDURES:** In order to ensure that that the PVAHCS is communicating a single clear message, communications involving any function of the PVAHCS through social media must be coordinated through the Public Affairs Officer. Employees, managers, or volunteers are not authorized to create their own social media sites, blogs, web pages, or other such communications forums, etc. that impact any staff or patients. However, in order to enhance our communications, employees are encouraged to assist with the multitude of public relations, communications efforts and social media aspects as outlined in this policy and policy 00PA1. Information posted will be related to that which is already posted on the facility website which is already in compliance with VHA guidelines. In regards to social media the following components apply:
 - A. **Public Relations Social Media and Web 2.0 Tools Tactics Include:**
 - i. Social Networking Sites (examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc.)
 - ii. Social Bookmarking Sites (del.icio.us, Digg, Reddit, Stumbleupon, etc.)
 - iii. Blogs (Blogger, Wordpress, LiveJournal)
 - iv. Micro-blogs (Twitter)
 - v. Media Sharing (YouTube, Flickr, Photobucket, SmugMug, WebShots)
 - vi. Podcasting (Prepared multimedia format distributed via iTunes)
 - vii. Syndicated Web-Feeds (RSS, XML)
 - viii. Widgets (Yahoo, Google, Apple)
 - ix. Wikis (Wikipedia, Intellipedia, WikiAnswers)

- IV. **PROFILE MANAGEMENT:** It will be the responsibility of the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) or other officially designated individuals to update and maintain any and/or all social media platforms in use by the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). Information posted will be related to that which is already posted on the facility website which is already in compliance with VHA guidelines. Duties of the PAO or designated individual include the following:

- A. **Posts/Updates:** Responsible for posting and/or updating the PVAHCS social media profile/feed
- B. **Quotes from Medical Experts:** Ability to include quotes from medical experts to be used on the PVAHCS social media profile/feed.
- C. **Quotes from VA Patients:** Ability to include quotes from VA patients (provided consents are obtained) to be used on the PVAHCS social media profile/feed.
- D. **Media Use:** Ability to include photographs, video, or audio clips to be used on the PVAHCS social media profile/feed.
- E. **Linking:** Ability to post links to events promoting and/or other websites promoting VA on the PVAHCS social media profile/feed.
- F. **Events:** Ability to promote both local and national VHA events.

V. **BRAND MANAGEMENT**

- A. **Public Profile Picture and Design:** Both the profile picture and the overall design of the social media profile should reflect the Phoenix VA Health Care System and match the graphic standards in regards to logo, usage, content color, etc. This should be done by using official logos in both the profile picture as well as the profile's background if at all possible. No section of the profile's picture or design should reflect personal preferences of any kind.
- B. **Intellectual Property**
 - i. All trademarks, copyrights, and registered intellectual property, including logos, slogans, phrases and "signs" are the property of the PVAHCS and as such are not to be reproduced without expressed written permission of the PVAHCS.
 - ii. Information posted will be related to that which is already posted on the facility website which is already in compliance with VHA guidelines.

VI. **COMMUNICATION**

- A. **"Following" and/or "Friending," "Becoming a Fan of" and other similar Social Media Functions**
 - i. In most social media outlets, a common function is to "follow," "friend," or become a fan of individuals, groups, or organizations. The PVAHCS will be able to "follow" individual or private members. This must be done with discretion however, as to discourage against any form of perceived prejudice or bias.
 - ii. "Following, or becoming a fan of a PVAHCS social media profile or feed, is allowed, but must also be done with discretion to discourage against any form of perceived prejudice or bias, or present the PVAHCS with a negative image (e.g. friending "spammers").
 - iii. "Friending" is not authorized as the social media sites are designed to create fan bases and promote dialogue through a broader forum.
- B. **Comments and Discussions**

- i. The PAO (or designated individual) reserves the right to remove any comments, discussions, posts, etc. that are displayed on the PVAHCS' profile/webpage/feed.

VII. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, BLOGGING, AND OTHER WEB 2.0 FUNCTIONS

A. Official PVAHCS Use of Social Media, Blogs, and Web 2.0

- i. Any and/or all communications regarding the Phoenix VA Health Care System are to be directly distributed through the Public Affairs Officer. Therefore, posting information on the social media sites by PVAHCS employees who have not been approved by the PAO is strictly prohibited. According to VA Policy the Public Affairs Officer or specially designated officials are the sources authorized to speak on behalf of the PVAHCS through any means, including any forms of social media.
- ii. It is the duty of Public Affairs Officer or his/her designee to assure such policy is maintained.
- iii. Information posted will be related to that which is already posted on the facility website which is already in compliance with VHA guidelines.

B. Personal Use of Social Media, Blogs, and Web 2.0

- i. Employees, who post any information through a personal website, a blog, social media, or any other means of online communication, are held fully responsible for the information posted and may be counseled for what they have posted if it is in violation of any federal guidelines, ethical authorities, etc.
- ii. Employees expressing opinions via the internet must include a disclaimer saying "This content is the view of myself as an individual and do not represent the PVAHCS in any way." Failure to do so may result in counseling and further actions according to VA guidelines, rules and authorities.
- iii. Employees of the PVAHCS are NOT authorized to speak on behalf of the PVAHCS in any way, unless officially designated to do so by the Public Affairs Officer.
- iv. Employees are strictly prohibited from posting any content related in any way to patients' personal health information. Any violation of this protection of privacy will be dealt with according to VA rules, regulations and criminal prosecution if warranted.
- v. Use of PVAHCS logos or other copyrighted information is strictly prohibited without expressed written consent of the PVAHCS.

VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES: The Public Affairs Officer is directly responsible to initiate and maintain the course of action of the public relations/public affairs program including social media at the PVAHCS. The PAO reports directly to the Medical Center Director. The PAO will provide information of public relations/public affairs matters routinely to the Administrative Executive Board and the Governing Board.

IX. REFERENCES:

- a. The Phoenix VA Health Care System's Strategic Public Affairs Plan; updated annually

- b. VA Manual M-03-1, Graphic Standards Manual;
- c. References: MP-1, Part 1, Chapter 4, Changes 2 and 3, VA Information Policy, dated March 7, 1974;
- d. VA Directive 6300, Records and Information Management, dated January 12, 1998.
- e. Phoenix VA Health Care System Logo Standards and Guidelines, dated January 1999

X. **RESCISSION**: None

XI. **EXPIRATION DATE**: July 2011

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