

Addendum to Acceptable and Supportable Use of Technology

POLICY NUMBER: 210-1000-004

ADDENDUM NUMBER: 2

ADDENDUM TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PROCEDURE

EFFECTIVE DATE:

REVISION DATE:

APPROVED BY:

Confirmed by Council of The Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government,

Ordinance No. ____

dated the ____ day of _____, ____.

An addendum, which shall be included as part of the original policy, to Policy No. 210-1000-004, Acceptable and Supportable Use of Technology.

STATEMENT OF ADDENDUM:

The Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government (CCG) establishes policies regarding acceptable and supportable use of technology. This addendum provides guidance for employee use of social media, which includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with CCG, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

As a public sector government employee, you have a protected right to free speech; however, this right is limited. The First Amendment only protects government employees when they can demonstrate that (1) they are speaking as a private citizen, (2) about matters of public concern, and (3) the employee's interest in engaging in the speech outweighs the Columbus Consolidated Government's interest in prohibiting the speech in order to promote the efficiency of the public services it performs through its employees. If a government employee's speech is made pursuant to his or her official job duties and/or if the speech adversely affects the efficiency, professionalism, or integrity of your Department or the Columbus Consolidated Government, you can be disciplined or terminated for what you say.

The use of social media presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, these guidelines establish appropriate use of social media.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all employees of the Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG/City).

RESPONSIBILITY:

Department Directors have the responsibility to address and correct employee behavior when inappropriate social media activity occurs that is in violation of this policy. Employees have the responsibility to ensure their use of social media is not in conflict with this policy.

PROCEDURE:

The following procedures and guidelines apply to professional use of social media on behalf of CCG as well as personal use of social media.

- Employees need to know and adhere to the City's Policy on Workplace Rules, Code of Ethics, Discrimination and Harassment Policy, Employee Handbook, and Acceptable and Supportable Use of Technology when using social media.
- Employees should be aware of the effect their actions may have on their images, as well as CCG's image. The information that employees post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- Employees should be aware that CCG may observe content and information made available by employees through social media. Employees should use their best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to CCG, its employees, customers, visitors, or citizens.
- Although not an all-inclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are offensive, defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, threatening, libelous, that can create a hostile work environment, or that are otherwise outside the legal boundaries of the right to free speech. It may also include discriminatory remarks, threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct.
- Employees are not to publish, post or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with their supervisor or Department Head.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to authorized CCG spokespersons.
- CCG employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow employees or negatively impacts the CCG, customers, visitors, or citizens may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- CCG employees should be fair and courteous to fellow employees, city officials, customers, and citizens, and keep in mind that they are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by utilizing their chain of command and the Fair Treatment Policy than by posting complaints on a social media outlet. Employees who post complaints or criticism that could be viewed as

malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage employees, city officials, customers, citizens, and visitors, may be disciplined up to and including termination.

- Employees should never represent themselves as a spokesperson for CCG unless they are authorized to do so and when expressing personal opinions make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of CCG.
- Employees should not speak to the news media on CCG's behalf without written express permission from the employee's Department Head.

Retaliation Prohibited

- CCG prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.