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**Guideline: Participation in Social Media**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this guideline is to assist NESA BN Programs students, faculty, and program staff in maintaining professionalism when participating in social media activities.

**BACKGROUND:**

Social media is an innovative way to facilitate free flowing communication exchange between people, organizations, and communities. Opportunities to engage in social media may present in a myriad of forms such as blogs, Twitter, YouTube, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), picture sharing, email, instant messaging, etc.

Nurses are increasingly using various forms of social media ‐ both in their professional and personal lives. It is important, however, to recognize that despite the many benefits of social media, there are also inherent risks with regard to its potential effect on personal and professional relationships, patient privacy and confidentiality, legal obligations, and professional conduct. Some of the potential risks of social media result from:

* + The extensive scope of information distribution;
  + The permanence of posted information;
  + The difficulty of effectively concealing confidential information;
  + The potential for misinterpretation by the person(s) receiving information;
  + The possible damage to personal and/or professional reputations; and
  + The potential for legal consequences associated with breeching privacy and confidentiality.
  + The potential to breach professional boundaries

Social media can be extremely valuable to those engaging in its use and nurses can use social media to enhance learning, communicate ideas, reflect on new or meaningful experiences, and share important information. “Nurses must be aware of social media’s evolving culture, understand ever-changing technology, and have the skills and judgment to use it appropriately” (International Nurse Regulator Collaborative, 2014 as cited in CARNA, 2011, p. 1)

“E-professionalism is defined as the attitudes and behaviors that reflect traditional professionalism paradigms but are manifested through digital media” (Kaczmarczyk, Chuang, Dugoff, Abbott, Cullimore, Dalrymple, & Casey, 2013 as cited in College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, 2011). “E-professionalism incorporates the use of social media such as websites, applications, and networking platforms that enable users to create and share content, or to participate in social networking. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, email, etc., are commonly used. Although the intent of social media use is to be positive, there have been unintended negative consequences. As regulated health professionals, nurses need to understand their professional and ethical obligation to protect the public and maintain conduct that reflects trustworthiness and integrity, including in their online presence.” (CARNA, 2011, p. 1).

CARNA outlines the importance of maintaining e-professionalism and provides guidance when making informed decisions about the responsible use of social media in their document: Social Media: e-Professionalism for Nurses (March 2020).

**DEFINITIONS:**

***Social Media*** *-* websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

**GUIDELINE SCOPE:**

This guideline applies to all NESA BN Programs instructors, faculty members, staff members and students enrolled at the Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge campuses.

**SPECIFICS OF THE GUIDELINE:**

1. Self‐reflection and professional behavior are important components of professional practice. As registered nurses or as students of the profession, it is necessary to demonstrate professionalism in all actions. Therefore, prior to participating in social media use, ask yourself the following questions:
   1. Do the comments or posts reflect who I am as a person and as a professional?
   2. Could my post be taken out of context by the reader?
   3. Do the pictures have the potential to misrepresent or violate privacy and confidentiality for myself and/or others?
   4. What is the extent of distribution of the information posted, and is the information appropriate for all potential recipients?
   5. How could this posting potentially impact my professional standing and future opportunities for employment?
   6. Could the information shared jeopardize relationships with my peers, colleagues, patients, patient families, or institutions?
   7. Would I be comfortable standing up in front of a room of my colleagues and stating this information out loud?
   8. Was my message delivered in a moment of intense emotion that should have been reflected upon prior to sharing information?
2. Should you have any questions regarding the implication of social media participation, please consult with your instructor or program leadership at the appropriate institution*.*

**APPENDIX:**

None

**RELATED POLICIES/ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES:**

**REFERENCES:**

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| **Revised By/date:** | **Approved by/date:** |
| Policy Review Committee: April 2013 | NESA Joint Faculty: May 2013 |
| Policy Review Committee: April 2014 | Not Required: editorial and formatting |
| Policy Review Committee: March 2015 | Not Required: editorial and formatting |
| Policy Review Committee: April 2016 | Not Required: no change |
| Policy Review Committee: March 2017 | Not Required: no change |
| Policy Review Committee: December 2017 | Not Required: editorial changes; link update |
| Policy Review Committee: January 2019 | Not Required: editorial changes |
| Policy Review Committee: December 2019 | Not Required: editorial changes |
| Policy Review Committee: January 2021 | Not Required: added CARNA info |