

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parents are required to comply with this policy in accordance with the Family Care Home Agreement, Child, Family and Community Service Act, and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact: MCF.PrivacyImpactAssessment@gov.bc.ca

Definitions:

In this guide:

“Child-in-Care” or “Child” means a child who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a director.

“Social Media” includes and is not limited to any social media platform including: Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Messenger Apps etc.

Preamble:

Thanks to technology it is easy to share our ideas, opinions, pictures and videos with people through various Social Media platforms. Social Media has become significant in how individuals are communicating and connecting with their peers, however it does not come without privacy and safety concerns.

This guide is intended to support foster parents in understanding their obligations around their use of Social Media in relation to a Child-in-Care. It also provides tips to help foster parents ensure safe use of Social Media by a Child-in-Care.

Use of Social Media by Foster Parents:

While foster parents may have personal Social Media accounts they should never use these accounts to communicate confidential, sensitive or personal information about a Child-in-Care. Disclosing confidential, sensitive or personal information could put the Child at risk of harm.

It is important that the Child-in-Care feels they are part of the family and foster parents are encouraged to take photos and document family events such as barbecues, special occasion celebrations, vacations, etc. These photos and documents are special memories that will form part of the Child’s Lifebook¹ but foster parents must be thoughtful about how and what information is shared on Social Media. Social Media lacks the level of security necessary to ensure ongoing protection of information even with the strictest of security settings on user profiles.

A foster parent may post photos and material on Social Media but a foster parent must:

- Respect the wishes of the Child if they indicate they do not want certain photos or videos of themselves to be shared on Social Media.
- Not post any material that would reveal the Child’s status (current or past) as a Child-in-care.
- Only use a Child’s first name.
- Not tag² a Child in photos or materials including those posted by others.

¹ What is a Lifebook: <http://fpsss.com/services-programs/lifebooks/>

² Tag: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/help/124970597582337/>
Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/627963287377328>

- Not post pictures or other material that would reveal a location where a Child is regularly present (e.g. school name/location, foster home address etc.)
- Not use Social Media to communicate with a Child's parents or birth family.

A Child-in-Care is not obligated to add (e.g. Facebook friend) foster parents on their Social Media accounts. If a Child chooses to add a foster parent to their Social Media account(s) then the foster parent must ensure the Child's privacy is protected as it relates to their status as a Child-in-Care. A Child-in-Care is not obligated to provide foster parents with their user names or passwords for Social Media accounts however if they choose to share this information then it is important to keep this information confidential and secure.

Use of Social Media by a Child-in-Care:

Use of Social Media is not recommended for a Child under 13 years of age.

In knowing the possible risks of using Social Media it is tempting to forbid use of these platforms. Access to the internet, computers and mobile devices has become so easily accessible that preventing use of Social Media is not only unrealistic but can be perceived as detrimental to children in building social relationships with their peers. Social Media can be an important outlet for expressing and shaping identity for children but it is important that children are provided with guidance and boundaries about safe use of Social Media.

It is important to educate a Child-in-Care about digital safety, engaging with them on what they are doing online, and empowering them to be safe. A Child should be familiar with:

- How to set security and privacy³ on their accounts.
- Confidentiality: the implications of posting photos and videos on Social Media.
✓ Remember the internet never forgets!
- Safety: never add/talk/meet with unknown people on Social Media.
- Anonymity: people aren't always who they say they are.
- Risks: cyberbullying, predatory behaviour, not posting personal information

EXAMPLE

There have been situations where homes have been burglarised after people have posted online that they were going away on holidays.

Foster parents must ensure that computers accessed by a Child are placed in a central location, such as the kitchen or living room, and they monitor computer use including the amount of time spent on the computer. A Child-in-Care is entitled to reasonable privacy⁴ so it is important to balance monitoring of the computer, or mobile device use with the Child's right to privacy. The Child's age, capacity, and living arrangements may be factors to consider in determining what is reasonable monitoring or time spent on computer or mobile devices. If you are unsure or have any questions please discuss this with the Child's social worker.

If you have reason to suspect a Child-in-Care is engaging in on-line activity that puts them at risk report this immediately to the Child's social worker.

Twitter: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309#>

³ Privacy Settings: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/help/325807937506242>

Twitter: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/18368>

Instagram: <http://help.instagram.com/116024195217477>

YouTube: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/157177?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en>

⁴ CFCSA Section 70: http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96046_01#section70

Effective Date: July 1, 2018
Last Updated: June 20, 2018

Resources:

1. Foster Family Handbook: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/foster-parenting/foster_family_handbook.pdf
2. Popular App Guide for Parents and Teachers: <https://smartsocial.com/app-guide-parents-teachers>
3. www.mediasmarts.ca includes information and guides for children and parents including:
 - [Social Networking](#)
 - [Cyberbullying](#)
 - [Excessive Internet Use](#)
 - [Online Ethics](#)
 - [Privacy](#)
 - [Sexual Exploitation](#)
4. <http://www.cyberwise.org/> includes information on internet safety, security, privacy, cyberbullying etc.