



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NO.306

Social Media Policy

Date Issued June 15, 2021	Date Effective June 15, 2021	Revision No.	No. of pages 2
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1. PURPOSE:

To provide guidance on official Worcester Police Department and off-duty employee use of social media.

2. DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Social Media:** Internet based sites or tools that facilitate information sharing among individuals, including, but not limited to, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat.
- B. **Social Media Presence and Conduct:** Content generated by the user, including posts, shares and “likes”

3. WORCESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Social media is an excellent way for police departments to keep the public informed about events around the city and the police department. The Worcester Police Department will maintain appropriate social media accounts to inform the public. Only personnel approved by the chief shall have access to the Worcester Police Department’s social media accounts.
- B. The Worcester Police Department is a government agency and will generally not delete citizen comments on our social media pages. Exceptions to this include comments that contain threats of violence, or comments that express hatred based on racial, ethnic, religious or gender identity. These type of comments will be deleted when discovered. Some comments are automatically deleted or hidden by social media companies due to profanity or other factors, and the Worcester Police Department is not involved in this.

4. OFF-DUTY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

- A. Officers must keep in mind that nothing on the internet is truly private, and social media posts can be used to discredit an officer’s testimony in court, among other negative consequences. The department has a legitimate interest in preserving the public’s trust and respect. An employee’s off-duty social media presence and conduct must not bring discredit to the employee or department, negatively impact the Department’s operation, or affect the employee’s ability to perform his or her job. The Worcester Police Department will generally limit its inquiries into an employee’s off-duty online conduct to situations reflecting upon the department or affecting the

employee's fitness for duty. The Worcester Police Department will not proactively monitor officers' personal social media accounts provided that there is no active criminal or administrative investigation that would require monitoring of that account.

- B. Officers shall not use their personal social media accounts to disclose confidential law enforcement information or use their affiliation with the Worcester Police Department to endorse any product or service without prior authorization from the Chief. Officers shall not use the WPD logo or patch on their social media pages in a way that implies that they speak for the department.
- C. Officers shall not post content that reflects bias or hatred toward any individual or group because of their racial, ethnic, and religious or gender identity.
- D. Rules and regulations that currently govern off-duty behavior, including but not limited to prohibitions on Harassment and Conduct Unbecoming an Officer, also apply to social media behavior.

Per:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven M. Sargent". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Steven M. Sargent
Chief of Police

SMS:SMM