Employee Social Media and Online Communication Policy

Personal Expression, Professional Responsibilities, and Official District Communications

1. PURPOSE

Baker County Library District (BCLD) recognizes the value of social media and other online communications for sharing information, participating in public discourse, and connecting with the community. This policy establishes expectations for responsible online conduct related to District operations while respecting employees' freedom of expression, privacy, and other rights protected by law.

The policy distinguishes personal expression from conduct undertaken as part of District employment and from communications made on behalf of BCLD. It is intended to protect patrons, employees, public records, and District resources without suppressing lawful criticism or disagreement.

2. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

This policy applies to BCLD employees, including regular and substitute employees, and, as applicable to their assigned responsibilities, interns and volunteers. It applies to work-related social media activity whether conducted on or off duty and whether through District or personal devices, subject to applicable law. It does not give BCLD general authority over unrelated lawful personal expression.

Social media and online communications include social networking sites, blogs, video and livestreaming services, discussion platforms, messaging applications, and other digital means of publishing or exchanging content. An official District account is one authorized and controlled by BCLD for District business. A personal account is one maintained by an individual in a private capacity rather than on behalf of the District.

3. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

BCLD respects employees' rights to speak as private citizens, participate in public affairs, discuss working conditions, express personal opinions, and criticize District policies, decisions, or officials, consistent with applicable constitutional and statutory law. Disagreement, satire, criticism, or expression of an unpopular viewpoint does not by itself constitute a violation of this policy.

Employees speaking in a personal capacity should not misrepresent themselves as authorized District spokespersons. When context could reasonably create confusion, employees are encouraged to distinguish their personal views from official District positions. A particular disclaimer is not required merely because an employee mentions BCLD or links to its public website.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with protected reporting, whistleblowing, lawful workplace discussions, participation in public meetings, or other legally protected activity. Employee speech made pursuant to official job duties and speech affecting District operations may be subject to different legal standards; any proposed restriction or disciplinary response must be evaluated under the circumstances and applicable law.

4. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND WORKPLACE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees are expected to comply with applicable BCLD personnel policies and lawful workplace directions. Online activity may be addressed as workplace misconduct when it involves conduct such as unlawful harassment or discrimination, credible threats, prohibited bullying, unauthorized disclosure of protected information, impersonation of District officials, or other specific violations of law or District policy.

BCLD encourages employees to resolve workplace concerns through appropriate internal channels when useful, but internal procedures are not a prerequisite to lawful public expression or protected reporting. Employment action shall not be based solely on embarrassment to the District, reputational discomfort, or disagreement with an employee's viewpoint.

5. PATRON PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Employees shall protect patron information and other records whose disclosure is restricted by law or applicable District policy. Confidential information may include identifiable circulation or library-use records, patron contact details, protected personnel or medical information, account credentials, nonpublic security information, and legally privileged material.

Employees shall not disclose protected information through posts, photographs, screenshots, videos, livestreams, or messages. Particular care is required when images could expose circulation transactions, computer screens, patron identities in sensitive circumstances, or information about another person's use of library resources and facilities.

An internal document is not automatically confidential merely because it is labeled internal or distributed among staff. Requests for District records shall be referred to the District's established public records process; employees shall not independently resolve disputed disclosure questions through social media.

6. PERSONAL ACCOUNT PRIVACY

BCLD will respect employee and applicant rights concerning personal social media accounts under **ORS 659A.330** and other applicable law. The District will not require personal account passwords, compel an employee to add the District as an online contact, require promotion of the District through personal accounts, or demand private-account access except where expressly permitted by law.

This section does not limit lawful review of publicly available information or permitted investigations, and does not restrict administrative access to accounts provided by or operated on behalf of BCLD.

7. USE OF DISTRICT TIME, EQUIPMENT, AND SYSTEMS

Personal social media activity shall not interfere with assigned duties, patron service, workplace safety, or District operations. Limited personal use during authorized breaks or as otherwise permitted by District policies is allowed. Use of District devices, networks, and email accounts remains subject to applicable technology and personnel policies.

Employees shall not use District email addresses to establish accounts for personal purposes unless specifically authorized. Employees shall not use District accounts, access privileges, logos, or resources to imply official endorsement of personal views or causes.

8. OFFICIAL DISTRICT ACCOUNTS AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Only individuals authorized by the Library Director or designee may create, administer, or publish through official District social media accounts. Such accounts and their associated records, access credentials, and content created in an official capacity shall remain under District administrative control.

The Director shall establish administrative procedures for account oversight, approved personnel, backup access, security, records retention, content review, and responses to inquiries. Official posts should be accurate, accessible where practicable, consistent with District policies, and corrected promptly when materially inaccurate.

Employees shall refer media inquiries seeking an official District response to the Library Director or another designated spokesperson. Employees remain free to speak to news media in a personal capacity as permitted by law, provided they do not claim authority to speak for BCLD.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMENT MODERATION

When an official District account permits public comments or other public participation, BCLD shall administer that space consistently with applicable First Amendment requirements and the character of the forum it has established. District officials shall not remove or restrict comments merely because a commenter criticizes BCLD or expresses an unwelcome viewpoint.

The Library Director may adopt written, publicly available moderation rules setting legally permissible, consistently applied limits on such matters as spam, credible threats, unlawful content, and relevance where appropriate to the forum. Staff shall document moderation actions and preserve associated records when required by law. Any significant change to public commenting practices should receive appropriate legal review.

10. PUBLIC RECORDS AND RETENTION

Official District social media content and related communications may constitute public records. Employees shall conduct District business using authorized communication channels whenever practicable and comply with the applicable Oregon public records and retention requirements.

If District business is conducted through a personal account or device, employees shall promptly notify the appropriate District administrator and preserve or transfer responsive public records to an approved recordkeeping system. Personal ownership of an account or device does not, by itself, exclude District business records from legal preservation or disclosure requirements.

Employees shall not delete, alter, conceal, or direct others to destroy records to circumvent public records requests, retention schedules, litigation holds, or other legal obligations. Routine disposition may occur only under applicable records-management procedures.

11. PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO, AND SYNTHETIC CONTENT

Employees producing official digital content shall follow District procedures for photography, recording, patron consent when required, and protection of privacy. Posting images or recordings that disclose legally protected information is prohibited. This policy does not independently establish a blanket prohibition on otherwise lawful recording or protected documentation of workplace matters.

Official communications shall not knowingly use materially deceptive AI-generated images, audio, video, quotations, or factual claims. Employees shall verify the accuracy of substantive AI-assisted content before official publication and shall not enter confidential District or patron information into unauthorized external AI services.

12. REPORTING, NONRETALIATION, AND ENFORCEMENT

Concerns about potential violations may be reported to the Library Director or through another appropriate District reporting channel, including the Board Chair when the concern involves the Director. BCLD prohibits retaliation for good-faith reporting, participation in an authorized investigation, or exercise of rights protected by law.

Reported violations will be evaluated fairly in context, with due consideration of constitutional, statutory, contractual, and policy protections. Substantiated violations may result in corrective or disciplinary action consistent with applicable law and District personnel procedures. No disciplinary finding shall rest solely on an employee's lawful expression of a disfavored viewpoint.

13. ADMINISTRATION AND RELATED POLICIES

The Board of Directors establishes this policy. The Library Director is responsible for implementation and may adopt administrative procedures for official account management, records preservation, staff authorization, security, and public comment moderation consistent with this policy and applicable law.

This policy shall be interpreted alongside applicable BCLD policies, including the Technology Use Policy, Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, Public Records Policy, Harassment and Workplace Bullying Policy, and relevant personnel and records-management policies. In the event of a conflict, controlling law governs.

14. POLICY REVIEW

The Library Director will periodically review this policy and its administrative procedures in light of changes in law, technology, social media practices, and District operations. The Board will formally review this policy at least once every four years and more frequently when circumstances warrant.

Policy history: Origin 2017; comprehensive revision 10/2026.